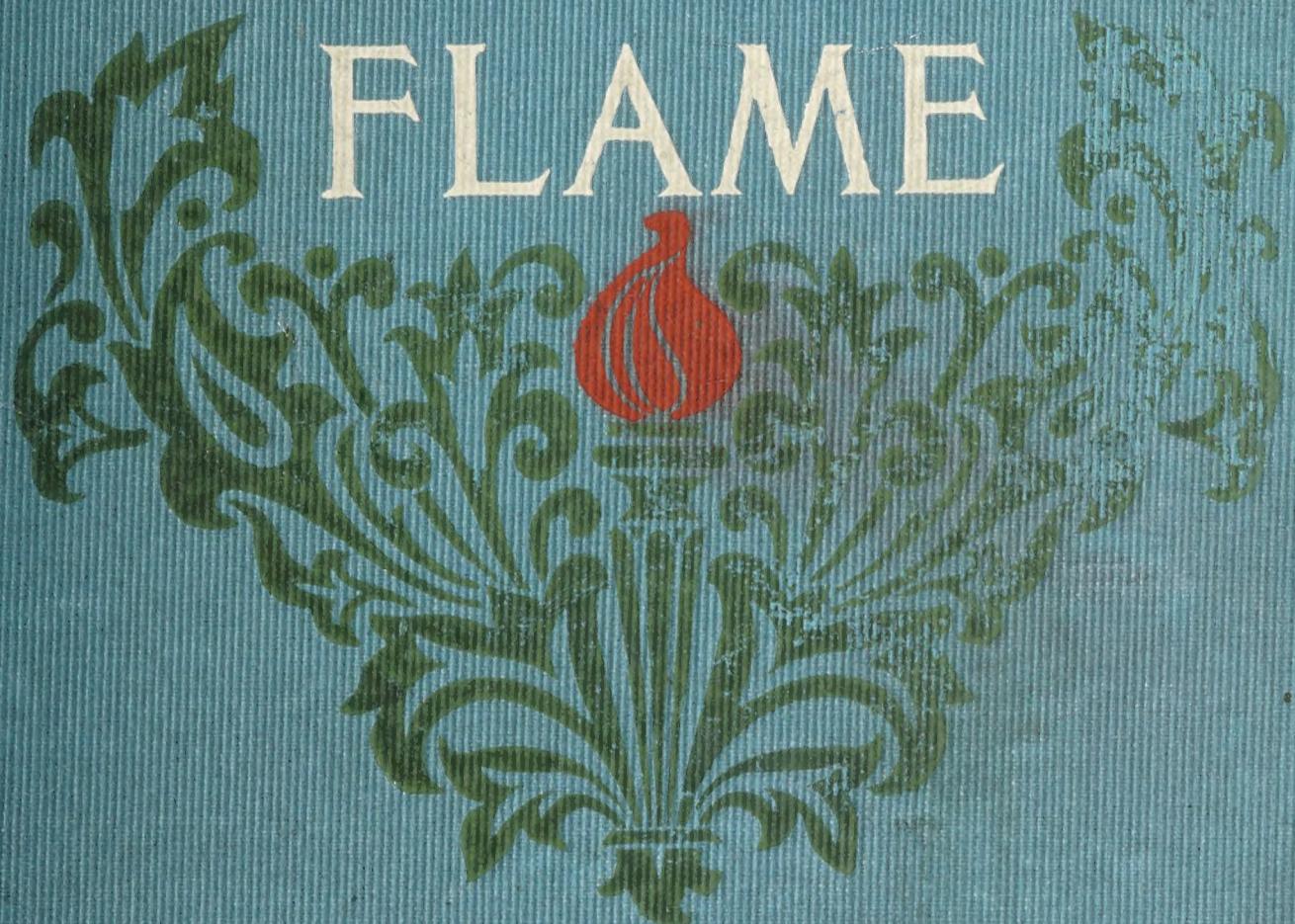


THE GUARDED FLAME



W. B. MAXWELL



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THE GUARDED FLAME

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

VIVIEN

THE RAGGED MESSENGER

FABULOUS FANCIES

THE COUNTESS OF MAYBURY

THE GUARDED FLAME

BY

W. B. MAXWELL

AUTHOR OF "VIVIEN"

WILLIAM BRIGGS
TORONTO

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THE GUARDED FLAME

I

THE last house on the cliff by the fishing village of Whitebridge is named Cliff Lodge. Tyndall—in one of his lectures—has spoken of it with these words: “I like to think of the necessary isolation of great minds. I like to think of that cliff tower above our southern sea, from which the flame of truth has shed amidst the darkness of so many years its steady radiance. I call that house the lighthouse.”

The owner of the house, with his young wife, is slowly climbing now from the harbour to his home. As he passes very slowly, in the pleasant September sunshine, women nod and smile at him; fishermen, mending nets by the bridge, touch caps and show white teeth in tanned faces; Mr Hind, the fancy stationer, at the corner of Pier Street, takes off his hat and stands on his dark threshold framed in fluttering magazines and dangling wooden spades; Mr Ingle, the hair-dresser, on the steps of his saloon in Harbour Wall, waves his hand affably. As, with slow footsteps, he passes onward and upward all eyes follow him. This is the morning walk, undeviating in extent, unchangeable in time, taken in fair weather and in foul: known to all Whitebridge as “the daily constitutional.” Now is the hour for strangers to get a peep at the great man: now is their chance—“Look out. Here he comes. . . . *What* the deuce is the matter with this confounded shutter? . . . Lord’s sake, Florrie, I’ve never put my films in!”

He is world-famous—from the slowly growing fame of forty years: our great philosopher, they call him on the Continent. He is the last and perhaps the biggest of the Victorian giants

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—one of that noble British group of noble men, the little band of philosophers and not merely “scientists”: Darwin, Spencer, Bain, Burgoynes, and two or three more, the lustre of whose names will surely never fade. He is Richard Burgoynes, old and honoured, last of the glorious band.

Husband and wife stop at two seats on the homeward climb. It is the daily routine—the same seats always, whence they look down on the queer little harbour, the iron swing-bridge, the dirty, sluggish river trickling out to soil the yellow sand, to stain the clean blue sea. From a black collier, high and dry by the wooden pier, with attendant carts and carters, there rises a pleasant music of open air toil—men’s voices, the song of the chains, and the rhythmic beat of rope and block. As the old man sits for his appointed rest he and his young wife talk very happily, like two children, taking childlike joy in the bright sun, the glittering waves, the moving air, the murmur of life.

Then, climbing again, on the high road now, within sight of the flint walls that surround their garden, he stops and points. A fly has driven into their gate.

“O Sybil! We are attacked. Shall we hide?”

It is a dreadful thought—that a visitor who cannot be turned away has come to squander the precious afternoon. And like children they slip round a corner—between the garden walls, in the narrow lane, from the road to the cliff path—and like children lurk and laugh at their own fears.

“O Dickon. Let’s be brave. Only some newspaper man!” and she looks up at him with a wistful tenderness.

It would be horrible if to-day he were to be caught and made to suffer the torment of unbidden guests—some vagrant American biologist who has corresponded with him for years, some professor of a German university, armed with letter of introduction from an illustrious confrère, and like a stout highwayman, using the weapon in the good old stand-and-deliver fashion. To-day, since dawn, he has been threatened with one of his headaches. Yet he has worked all through his regular morning hours; the air and the walk have done him

good ; but a mouthing German professor would certainly bring on the headache.

Apparently, however, the danger blows over. There is the sound of wheels—the fly has rolled away. And they emerge from their hiding-place and go on by the cliff path as happy as can be—she with her arm in his, he smiling down at her.

Physically, he is a grand man, and he looks surprisingly young in spite of those sixty-eight years, in spite of his colossal labour, in spite of the indifferent health of which these recurrent headaches are the most salient manifestation. Tall and broad, stooping, it would seem, only from the weight of the noble head ; grey-haired, grey-bearded, trimmed and neat ; wonderful grey eyes, clear and blue as water sometimes ; blue shirt, amber tie with intaglio ring, and a rough grey suit ; round cloth shooting hat, with a feather that she has fastened in the band ; muffler round his neck—open to-day in the genial sunshine ; and a short cape that she loves to carry for him. Thus the snap-shots always show him—thus Heppel painted him.

All along the cliff there are the flint walls, behind which the compact little houses stand well back, with narrow strips of garden, and with here and there a summer-house or look-out room perched upon the wall. Compared to these modest seaside dwellings, the Lodge is quite a mansion and its garden is a park. Its summer-house is, comparatively, a castle by itself : a solid square room, with solid slate roof and a much cowled chimney, offering three large windows for the lookers-out.

They pass in now by the green door in the wall beneath the summer-house and are secure from the flattering attention of alien eyes, safe in the well-ordered peace of their own domain. For a seaside garden it is wonderful. The wind-buffeted fruit-trees crouch, of course, but the ilex stands nobly upright and spreads its defiant green far and wide. Peaches and nectarines are ripe and large beneath the glass shelter that has been fixed above the walls ; the borders brim over with the rich-coloured autumn flowers ; laurels are well-clipped, and

the broad lawns are close-mown. The house is pleasant of aspect on this garden side: white, long, and broken in plan, with green shutters to the upper windows and iron balconies almost lost in the embraces of wistaria and clematis. The lower rooms, with big French windows, are only raised by a step above the level of the ground, so that the garden seems to woo the house and the house to woo the garden.

The visitor was, as they had surmised, a newspaper man; but the visitor had not gone. In blind confidence that his visit could not be unwelcome, he had deposited in the porch his big and his little camera and had dismissed the fly before he rang the bell and learned, from the rather grim old parlour-maid, the quite unexpected fact that Mr Burgoyne could not and never did entertain gentlemen from London with cameras or note-books. The visitor was now resting in the porch, said Mary the parlourmaid, and he had expressed a wish to speak one word with "the lady."

Really the newspaper men drove one almost mad. Years brought them no wisdom. Nothing would make them understand that the Lighthouse was not open to the public. The light was for the world, but not the inner chambers of the lofty tower from which the light shone.

It was curious, in this connection, to observe that the smaller the newspaper, the more impudent was the attack of its man. Thus, while the Editor of *The World Review*, would humbly own that he knew he was asking for the Roc's egg, as it were, but must plead in extenuation of his offence that he was being drawn by a force that no editor could resist—the desire of the whole English-speaking race, etc., etc., the accredited representative of *The Camberwell Advertiser* would send a stamped envelope and say very complacently, "Being wishful to include you in my series of Men of the Hour, I shall be obliged if you will give me an interview at an early date. Thanking you in anticipation," etc.

Once or twice, in the course of years, the entry was forced: by ruse always—never by the treachery of those two staunch guardians, the grim parlourmaid Mary, and Sarah her lieutenant.

Once, entering his room, Mr Burgoyne came upon an interviewer to whom physical obstacles were as nothing. He had climbed the flint walls, dropped down the wide chimney, been delivered in what seemed a case of books from the London Library! No matter, he was there now—walking about the big room as though he had been in a church, sighing, and turning up his eyes, murmuring, “Oh, but this is the torture of Tantalus. Oh, this room! This wonderful, wonderful room!” And the philosopher was looking at him as though he had been an ant—too gentle to tread on him. “But will you not give us at least a message for our readers? *Any* message summing up your philosophy!” Burgoyne showed him the long shelf of “file copies”—forty heavy volumes. “Could not your readers look for my message *there?*”

In two days it was all given to the greedy public, in a hiccoughing, sentimental, hysterical farrago. “Never to my dying day,” said the interviewer, “shall I forget the incredible dignity of the man as he turned upon me: the eye flashing, the ringing voice itself—the majesty of mind that beats off the burden of his seven decades. His hands shook with a noble emotion as he pulled the volumes down, one after the other. ‘Every volume on these shelves was penned by this hand. *That* is my message for all time.’”

It was nauseating stuff to be read by loyal dwellers in the Lighthouse.

But to-day they had to deal with a humbler visitor. He told Mrs Burgoyne that he quite understood the state of affairs.

“That’s all right,” said the poor little man. “I understand, ma’am. All I wanted was to ask permission to leave me ‘eavy camera here while I lug this other to the station. I’ll come back with some boy to ’elp me with the big ‘un. No more flies for me. This job has cost me enough a’ready,” and the little man tried to laugh, but his voice was husky.

“I am sorry you have had your trouble for nothing.”

He had turned away his head and was blowing his nose noisily.

"That's all right, ma'am, me own fault—to be sent on a fool's errand."

"I am very sorry."

Then, stirred by the note of kindness in her voice, looking at her with wet eyes, he told her in a burst of confidence of how he was "quite new to this job." He was a skilled photographer by profession, fond of his art—"for I call it an art, in a way, when you do the thing properly." But *The Orb* people, who paid him meanly for such prints as they bought, had told him to go down and do the Lighthouse thoroughly, and they would give him twenty guineas. "I might a' known it was a fool's errand when they said that. But I don't pretend to be a rich man—and I *wanted* the money. It's all me own fault. Fourteen shillings for me ticket. Three shillings for the fly—but I've bought me lesson," and again he tried to laugh. "Good-morning, ma'am."

"Wait, please," said Mrs Burgoyne.

The wave of pity had risen to her brain: that sense of the sadness of all life, something of the comprehending sympathy for every form of suffering, which comes to all who spend their days with thinkers, now moved her strongly. Unseen, behind this shabby little man, there stood perhaps a waiting wife and anxious, wondering children. And he had somewhat of the Stoic in his pain.

"Poor fellow," said Mr Burgoyne. "Let him do it, then."

"Dickon! How good you are," and she squeezed his hand in hers. In a moment he had understood. And in her thought of him now there ran the echoing words that sounded always in her thoughts of him: *Tout comprendre est tout pardonner.* Only a word and he had understood. It was her wish.

Thus the unbroken rule was broken. In these forty-five minutes before the luncheon hour he should have been lying on a sofa, resting after the walk. That was the unchanging law of the days. But to-day, instead of resting, he did the honours of his house, aided the skilled photographer at his work: first the hall ("upon me word I call this a very 'andsome apartment," said the happy visitor,); the shallow stairs with the

wide-railed, polished woodwork, and the large clock—"a pretty sight"; then the drawing-room, long and low, panelled ceiling, gay chintz, and old cabinets, with china glistening behind latticed panes that required a longish exposure; then the great man's room. "Your workshop, as one may say, sir. Ha, ha. Lift that blind couple inches more—thank you kindly, sir. Come, that's better. Now, if *you* want to be done with the room, I'll have you by the window. . . . It's for you to say. But I tell you fair, I mean to give it a fifty seconds' exposure and you'll have to sit still. Very good. In that case I needn't detain you."

Then the host, postponing the family meal, gave the visitor luncheon in the sunny dining-room and sat with him while he ate and drank. Leaning his head upon his hand in the characteristic attitude so well known to the small household, the host chatted very pleasantly; and the guest, happy and contented and completely at his ease with the great man, chatted also very pleasantly.

"When," said the guest, "are you scientific gentlemen going to give us coloured photography?"

"Ah!" and the host smiled. "You must ask Grindley—or Professor Jenner Cox. I have often thought of it—but you know really it is not in my line."

Yet he showed, as the guest went on munching, that he was not quite off the scent of the subject they were pursuing.

"You seem to know all about it, sir. I wonder you don't set yourself to take and do it for us."

Mr Burgoyne laughed good-humouredly; but at once drifted on towards his own line: speaking with wonderful simplicity.

"I want to bring the colours here," and he tapped his forehead. "Not there," and he pointed to the camera on a chair by the door. "When the true colour is in the thought, you won't have to bother about the plate, don't you see?"

The photographer did not see.

"Well. I express myself badly. But for instance: If you showed your excellent print of my room to my cat, she would not recognise it. Brain not developed sufficiently.

But to a stranger it will be a room—an untidy room : to you it is the room that you will carry away in your memory. To me, it will be *my* room—in all its colours, of course—As I look at the print, I can sit down in one of the chairs. You have given me the room itself."

"Well, I'll do my best. But you're very kind to say so."

"Do I make myself clear though? It is all here," and he touched his aching forehead : "the colour and the form, as well as the light and shade. Well then, all I meant was : we hope our brains will go on developing as they have gone on developing from the pussy level. That is the real progress of the world—not the amusing inventions—even coloured photography.'

But of course the photographer did not understand.

"Give me," he said, "what I see on my ground-glass when I am focussing the sitter. Just the colours like that—even no brighter than they look on the grey. I ask for no more: and I wonder you scientific gentlemen don't tackle it and do it."

For the broken rule a penalty was exacted: by the mysterious but inexorable laws of life, kindness must be paid for in pain. Work was impossible : the precious afternoon was squandered ; all the quiet household knew that the master had one of his headaches. Young Mr John Stone, the secretary, was given a half holiday and sent for a bicycle ride with Miss Effie Vincent, the niece. Mrs Burgoyne wrote a little note to clever Dr George Wren, who had been invited to dinner, and begged him to give her husband this pleasure on some other evening.

The worker lay supine in his workshop, dozing, dreaming, weaving into dreams the incidents and characters of the trashy novel from Mr Hind's shop, out of which Mrs Burgoyne was reading in an even, soothing voice. For a little time at least, the light was veiled.

He would come in to dinner—he always would ; and whatever the effort cost him, he talked.

"Wren? Where's George Wren? . . . Oh, too bad of you to put Wren off. I always like George Wren."

He talked more than the others. They sat very silent, suffering for him if not with him. To-night there could be none of the little family jokes: the innocent, well-worn jests that age made dearer. The two maids knew that they must hurry through the meal to give him peace.

Mr Stone, clean-shaved, dark and pale, bolted his food in the manner of a melancholy dog who is not really hungry. His dark eyes drooped; his thin lips closed; his clear-cut intellectual face became as a mask—a mask of dumb sympathy. Nothing would make Mr Stone talk to-night.

Miss Effie—so bright and fresh and sweet, with white collar, black blouse, and soft brown hair drawn and looped and ribbon-tied in the transition stages of girl-simplicity—would only show her pretty eyes to the table cloth. Nothing could rouse her to-night. When Uncle Richard sought, with a languor that he could not quite conceal, to tease her about the new bicycle skirt, she exhibited no spirit, seemed powerless to defend herself.

“I’ll wear it again to-morrow, if you like, Uncle Richard.”

Then silence.

In Mrs Burgoyne’s eyes there was affectionate solicitude, not hidden. No stranger perhaps would have said at once that Mrs Burgoyne was a pretty woman, yet people who knew her well sometimes thought that she was a very pretty woman. She was slim, but not slight in figure, dark-haired, broad of brow, with strong eyebrows over dark grey eyes and strong lips beneath a thin sensitive nose. Naturally a pale woman, but to-night anxious sympathy had brought two spots of colour to her cheeks. There was light and life in her face at all times, and to-night she looked as young almost as the girl of sixteen on the other side of the table. In her manner and her voice there was, most markedly, a something childlike that rarely survives childhood itself. She had dignity, but it was the dignity of a wise child, not the dignity of a mature woman. Perhaps on the emotional side of her nature, she was in truth no older than the girl.

This was all the little household.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mr Burgoyne lay upon a sofa again. He would not go to bed before his usual hour—he never would. Mr Stone sat reading near the cheerful wood fire. The nights were turning chilly: fires were becoming useful as well as ornamental. Effie, in a circle of lamplight, sat plying her embroidery needle. Close to her husband's couch Mrs Burgoyne sat musing, book in hand, waiting to read aloud should any more of the foolish novel be required.

When the maid came in to take away the coffee, signals were exchanged between one and another, and then the maid, moving cautiously on tiptoe, carried off the lamps. He was dozing: the lamplight might hurt his eyes. Mr Stone and Effie, abandoning book and work, both understood, both nodded their approval. Then the warm firelight alone showed the silent group in the pleasant, homely room. It was a pleasant picture, thus, of the great man wrapped round with love, solicitude, and veneration.

"Will it tire you to read to me a little more?"

Then Mr Stone, with silent footfall, brought from the mantelpiece a pair of silver candlesticks and placed them on the little table at Mrs Burgoyne's elbow. But the candles were only candle-ends: one of them was almost lost in its silver socket. To summon the maid or go oneself to fetch new candles would be disturbing: by signs Mr Stone was instructed to light the bigger of the candle-ends. Silently he obeyed. Then with dexterous fingers he extracted the other waxy stump, put a penny across the socket, put the stump on the coin, and lit it also. Then the reading began.

Presently Miss Effie and Mr Stone stole away through the open door into the next room, where the lamps were burning, to whisper together while they played some childish card game; and husband and wife were alone.

Was he asleep? She had been reading for a quarter of an hour, and the flame from the guttering stump had begun to leap and flicker. Leaning forward, she was about to blow out the flame when her husband's hand upon her arm checked her. He was not asleep: he had been watching the candle.

"Don't," he pleaded, "don't blow it out." And his voice had the tone of a man speaking to himself, as he went on drowsily murmuring. "That would seem almost cruel—so near the end. No. Don't do that, dear. It will last a long time yet—quite a long time yet—if we are careful."

Then the reading was continued.

For a quarter-of-an-hour, for half-an-hour, for nearly an hour, Mrs Burgoyne read on in her even, musical, soothing voice. Then, just as a shadow seemed to fall upon the page, her husband spoke again.

"Look! The candle-end! Look. Only *now*—a long time."

Suddenly, as she laid down the book, sadness filled her heart. He had been symbolising his life—all of life that was left to him: the little, guarded flame that fights the darkness. Stooping over him, she kissed his forehead and whispered in a tone of extraordinary tenderness.

"*Dickon!*"

"My clever Sybil," and he took her hand and patted it.

II

HIS fame had come to him very slowly.

From the scientific world recognition had been withheld for two main reasons. The big men are necessarily too busy with their own work to keep a sharp lookout for newcomers: they rely on the smaller men to do the watching, to present for promotion in due course fit and worthy candidates for the unpaid posts of honour. But the small men are warped with prejudice, bound in chains of class-association: only in their own dull ranks will they seek the candidate.

At the outset of his career there was much against Richard Burgoyne from the point of view of small "professional" minds. He was a young man of ample means and good family; as the son of a country gentleman he had gone, quite in the ordinary course of events, to Oxford—to Christ Church. Here he had taken his M.D. degree; but here also he had hunted regularly, he had shot often, and he had once ridden one of his own private horses in a steeplechase.

These were damaging facts—not malicious fancies—to be known and noted by all. He was a clever young man, if you like, with the loose, slapdash, amateurish cleverness which sits very well on a young lord, but which cannot be accepted seriously at meetings in Albemarle Street or soirées at South Kensington. A swaggering, *horsey* young man with a certain pen aptitude and the sort of shallow receptive brain which absorbs all the floating half-formed notions of the moment—whose first printed paper was an article in one of the reviews on *Colour and Temper of our English-bred horses*.

Editors of heavy reviews liked young Mr Burgoyne's articles, but they found him indurated and inductile. Editors always want the new article to be the old article in new words, but this contributor would give them something different. When

told there was room for some more *Horses*, he wrote *The Ratchet-movement in Clocks and Human beings; or the Law of Compensation for Live and Dead things*. When he received the flattering information that readers liked his clocks and wished to have clocks again, he sent in *Ethics before the dawn of Reason*. He wrote so many articles that it was impossible for the rank and file of the dull scientific army altogether to ignore them. They owned it was clever clap-trap—as good clap-trap as you were likely to get from an amateur.

He was thirty-two when he published *The Magic Mirror*, his first book. He had used the old simile of the internal mirror for the phenomenon of consciousness, and he had furnished his title-page with a sub-title: *As in a Glass Darkly*. The book met with a popular success which in later years he himself regretted ; which, at the time, minor physiologists and minor psychologists could not pardon. Oh, alliterative clap-trap ! Yet there was good work in the book : enough, one might have guessed, for some big candid mind to see, shadowed forth as in a glass darkly, the better things that soon were coming.

Of his private life very little now was known. In another year it was said that he had bought a house—the newspapers called it an estate—on the south coast, and that there he was living in complete retirement. He had, in truth, during the ten years since he left Oxford, lived a varied and a busy life. He had worked for twelve months in the clinical wards of the Edinburgh hospital ; for twelve months Anton Nelcker, Professor of Biology at the Josephinum, Vienna, could have said what he was doing ; the astronomers at the observatory, Williams College, U.S.A., had known him for nearly a year ; he had been to Borneo with the eclipse expedition ; he had travelled in South America by himself, and had been through the forests of Brazil with Benecker, in his final search for the trimorphous orchids ; but he had done very little hunting and shooting at home in England. He was alone in the world —parents dead, an only sister married ; he was a man of means and leisure—what did it matter to anyone else how and where he amused himself ?

From the house by the sea came in three years the *Bases and Beginnings*—two ponderous volumes. Here was something commanding attention: a heavy piece that, merely because of its calibre, the sheer weight of metal thrown, called for expert criticism. One could of course say that, in spite of weight of metal and the noise it made, it had less range than a pop-gun. All the small people said it. And that dreadful clap-trap alliteration again! Will he never drop it? But to big people, this book was less like a gun than a quarry—a thought-quarry that a big man might work in boldly and without shame. “For the leading idea of this treatise,” said Atmore, a really big man, in a preface, “I am indebted to the ingenious argument and illuminating speculation contained in the third chapter of Mr Burgoynes *Bases and Beginnings*.”

This preface caused a change of song in the small-voiced chorus. “What is this man?”—they sang. “Is he a biologist, a physiologist, a physicist, a naturalist, a botanist, a geologist, a palaeontologist, a morphologist? This is our difficulty: let him plainly say which he is and we shall know how to deal with him.”

It did not seem to occur to anyone that the man might be none and yet all of these things.

At this period of his career it was that there leaked out—through the public press—a most damaging fact. In his silent house at Whitebridge, he habitually dressed for dinner. Now the frock-coated professional gang knew what to call him. They called him “the dress-clothes philosopher,” and crowded with glee as they observed the swiftly disastrous effect wrought by this opprobrious epithet upon his reputation in the thoughts of the large and untrained public that had liked *The Magic Mirror*.

Then from the silent house came forth that truly great work, the *Mental Physiology*, in which he dropped for ever the word psychology. In this work he first touched his analysis of thought: bridging the void between the exposition of mechanical process and the intellectual concept of resultant mental action. It was an attempt to answer the old despair-

ing cry: One can follow the molecular changes that occur when one thinks, but one is as far off as ever from understanding how or why one thinks! But it was more than this: it was a revelation, as in a flash of dazzling light, of the power of thought that lay stored in the man himself.

To him, there was no mystery. For him the dual aspect was unified. To him the oneness of objective and subjective phenomena was clear. One could not say that he made it clear to others, but he conveyed to earnest students the conviction that it was clear to him. It was as though his mind had passed that barrier of intellect that stops us all: as though he could himself most firmly grasp the unthinkable idea. Across the dark border-line of thought, he stood in the strong light, beckoning, saying, "Here is the widening avenue along which all minds must progress." He has gone a little farther than the rest. That is all.

Casual students were only sure of one thing about the book: it infallibly proved that the brain is the organ and seat of thought, because it infallibly made your head ache.

It was reserved for one who on many occasions had been quick in hailing genius with complete and splendid praise, now to honour Richard Burgoyne. Huxley, in a letter to Banks, said that not since the publication of the *Origin of Species* had he found such difficulty in mastering the contents of a book, but in this case, as in that other, the book was royally worth the patient effort needed for its mastery.

Slowly, as the years rolled, the wonderful books followed one another. A huge treatise like the *Organised Chaos*, pamphlets of five hundred pages like the *Universal Republic* or the *Structural Principles*, vast, four-volumed, elaborated compendiums like the *Rhythmic Curves*, or the *Causes and Consequences*—book after book. Slowly, as the long years rolled, his fame waxed greater and greater. The big men called him Friend, Brother, Master. In many tongues, in many lands, the fame was chronicled. Far and near men were carving his name on tablets that they hoped would last for ever—the pages of their own books. No really big man, no matter what

his department of knowledge or conjecture, could write a book without putting in the name again and again and again. He was not a biologist, a physicist, a morphologist, etc., etc. All the realm of human knowledge was his. He had no plan or fixed intention, but it seemed that, if he lived, he would write a book for every province of his realm. He had risen high above envy, had soared beyond the wings of hate: down, down beneath him, on the immeasurably distant plain, the little men were singing to his glory.

"Oh, Causes and Consequences!" sang the little men. "He has gone back to his glorious alliterative titles. We always loved his alliterative titles, and so we always sang."

He was fifty-six when he married his Sybil, the only child of Joseph Randle, the geologist.

Old Randle's modest country house at Woking was one of the very few houses in which he stayed as a highly-prized but most infrequent visitor. Sybil used to help her father in his plodding, unceasing work—a wise and learned girl at fourteen, who writes official letters, makes notes, and copies diagrams as another girl would keep poultry, or do wool-work. She was full of veneration for Mr Burgoyne—the great light: flushing with pride when he spoke to her, listening with long-drawn breath, while he talked to papa, mamma, and their neighbours at the little dinner-party which always crowned the brief visit, making lines on her white forehead and contracting her strong eyebrows by her effort to frame an intelligent thought in fairly intelligible words when compelled to speak before *him*, praying to the unseen forces that govern thought and speech not in *his* eyes to make her seem a stammering, red-cheeked fool.

When poor papa died, *he* came to the funeral; and she watched him through her tears across the open grave. The world had turned grey in honour of the grey dead man; grey clouds moved slowly while the soft rain fell; and all about the fresh-turned earth, the noble group had gathered like grey shadows. One was tall and thin, wrapt in the long cloak,

slouch hat in hand, with bowed head—the one that she had never seen except in pictures. Behind them stood shadows more vague: Fellows of the Royal Society, representatives of the universities, meaningless forms on the drifting grey background of her dazed thoughts—his old colleagues from Liverpool, the staff of the Museum in Jermyn Street, humble old friends beckoned to their places on the fringe of the mourning circle, by the dead hand.

But *he* was king of the shadows: as she saw him weep, her tears fell faster, till the shadows faded and were gone, and she and her mother stood alone beside the earth-filled trench.

He came back three days after the funeral and asked her to be his wife. At fifty-six, he was splendid—never a strong man really, but the life in him most wonderful. The time had come, he said, for him to think of marriage; and his kind eyes smiled at her. And again he asked her if she could marry him. But first, before she answered, she must think of all she was giving up—it was a great thing that he asked of her. Most carefully he concealed the material advantages of the offer. In fact, the poor widow was left almost without means. Some small pension, a mere pittance, was all—but this the daughter must not know, if he could save her from knowing it.

Yes, she says. All that she gives up is nothing to her. She is simplicity itself: a daughter of science, handmaid of these old thinking men—without dreams, without cravings.

Then came the joy in learning that her mother is to go with her to the house by the sea. It will be all just the same—husband to work for, instead of father.

In this manner her quiet married life began. In the silent world of thought, time is a thought-standard only, to be taken from a shelf and used in some measuring-work, to be replaced upon a shelf and forgotten till the dust hides it; in a sense, the years are flying, in a sense the years stand still; rest is but an aspect of motion; soon her mother lay by her father's side; it was yesterday that a priest put her hand in his, yet to-day is her twenty-third birthday, her twenty-fourth, her twenty-fifth birthday.

But at last Miss Effie burst into their days, stirring the stagnant hours: disturbing, stimulating, but most welcome. She was his great niece: the granddaughter of that sister who had gone to India with a soldier-mate so many years ago. Now the years had taken all: sister, nephew, nieces; and this child of the third generation stood suddenly alone in the world. Mrs Burgoyne went to Brussels and brought her home to Uncle Richard—a black travelling companion with red eyes, who gave a spasmodic sniff as each speeding telegraph pole reminded her that they were hurrying farther and farther away from Brussels and the cemetery of Sainte Clotilde.

Effie, when the handkerchiefs became dryer, was the cause of many changes. Governesses must be procured—day governesses, and the sound of a piano broke the mid-day silence. There had been no piano in all the house, till Effie came. Then Mrs Burgoyne must take up a queer habit: she must go to church on Sundays, because the child must go there. Mrs Burgoyne was not a believer in the Christian revelation. How could she be?

On that first Sunday, the congregation scarcely tried to conceal their surprise. The vicar seemed tempted to come down the chancel steps to express his pleasure in this unexpected visit and to urge Mrs Burgoyne to make herself at home. Perhaps another day she would bring her husband. The good vicar had always wished that Mr Burgoyne would attend divine service now and then—if only for the look of the thing. Somehow he never mentioned the wish to Mr Burgoyne, but he spoke of it to everyone else. It was “disheartening”—he used to say—and he believed if Mr Burgoyne could realise *how* disheartening it was, he would not stop away.

Mrs Burgoyne could not make herself at home on this initial occasion: she could not even find her place in the sacred book. But she knelt, stood, sat, bowed at the proper moment, found herself saying the creed, and suddenly felt almost ashamed, as an impostor that even Effie must bowl out before long. There was a missionary sermon that seemed to her palpably ridiculous, but one of the anecdotes made Effie cry

again. In the churchyard, the friendly, foolish residents of the little place sought introductions to Effie and clustered to welcome her aunt upon hallowed ground. "Your famous husband! Quite a long piece about him in the newspaper. Did you see it? I could send it round." They gauged everything by that—the "pieces" in the newspapers.

Effie made friends easily. In summer months when all the lodgings were let, she brought a strange procession of long-haired Mauds and Kates and loud-voiced Dicks and Herberts through the warm sunlight of the quiet garden and the cool shade of the quiet house. She assured parents and guardians that everybody would be "simply *delighted*" if they cared to pay their respects at the Lodge. She even gave parties—rounders, and then tea. "The very kindest old gentleman you ever saw." Thus mammas would tell their almost unbelievable tale in Peckham and Brixton. "I'm sure he was just as fond of shrimps as my Kate there. . . . My Herbert and he were as thick as thieves. He said that boy is a fine fellow and ought to astonish the world one day." Too soon the summers waned—for Effie: too soon would come the hour of parting, clasped hands and clinging embraces at the railway station; and then these sunburnt friends of happy youth would vanish utterly—never to return.

At all times, except during the tourist season, Effie in her childhood was a grand companion for Mrs Burgoyne. She dragged her from the dim thought-world into the dancing daylight. Outwardly they were aunt and niece; inwardly they were playmates. When Effie commanded Uncle Richard to buy her a bicycle, she commanded him also to buy one for Aunt Sybil.

"But, Effie, do you think she would like it?"

"I am sure she would," said Effie. "You see, she may not know she would. She may *think* she wouldn't. If you asked her, I daresay she'd say not, but I know she'd like it."

"My dear, I believe you are right. I won't ask her, I'll get it."

"Yes. And, Uncle Richard—I've been thinking. I'm not

sure," and she looked at him with a critical intentness ; "I'm not *sure*, but I think you ought to get yourself a tricycle. They make them now with——"

But the great man hurried from the room. He did not want a tricycle.

Certainly, at first, Effie may have seemed to assume too absolute a control, but from the first she was entirely sweet, entirely good. Discretion came swiftly to temper affectionate impulses with understanding hesitations. The world is not a nursery : quite soon she understood. Henceforth it was her care to guard the thoughtful peace of Uncle's home and not to break it : only to laugh when Uncle needed music.

Above all else, she loved to help him—or to think she was helping him.

"Uncle Richard! Don't you think I might do a little tidying?"

"Well, my dear Effie, I shall be very glad of your assistance —later on"

"Not now?"

"You see—the fact is," said the author of *Structural Principles* apologetically, "I am in the middle of a book now, and I have always made it a rule to peg away at the book—postponing everything else, till the book is done. We always tidy *between* books."

"Then do hurry up with the book," said Effie. "I'm dying to begin."

III

"WITH that fellow to help me," said Mr Burgoyne, enthusiastically, "I could work double tides."

Young John Stone had been an immediate success. He was a medical student, who had just obtained his diploma from the R.C.P. of London—the most brilliant pupil that Reece had seen in his classes during fifteen years: an all-round man who already, at twenty-two, seemed assured of a big career. When there came that breakdown in health which too often is sequential upon premature development, Reece wrote to Burgoyne and told him all about the young man. He wanted change, and, if not rest, a relaxation of the old strain, fresh work in lieu of the old work; but he was poor, and it was not easy to know what one could do for him. Now if, by chance, Burgoyne was in need of a competent assistant in almost any field of research, Reece's invalid would be just the man.

Burgoyne, as it happened, needed such a man. Mr Edmundson had recently gone away to get married: young Mr Stone came to the Lodge on a sort of holiday engagement. He was silent, modest, cheerful, unobtrusive: in a day all the little household felt at home with him.

"Ah," said Mr Stone to Mrs Burgoyne, with a grave smile, as she showed him the big work-room. "So this is where the Spirit sits brooding over Chaos. I have seen this place in dreams."

Mrs Burgoyne told her husband that she thought it was one of the nicest things she had ever heard said about him.

"*Too* nice," said Mr Burgoyne. "I hope the young fellow isn't a flatterer."

"*Too* wise to be that," said Mrs Burgoyne. "But he looks dreadfully ill."

Then, quite an hour afterwards, the great man chuckled.
“What is it, Dickon?”

“The Spirit brooding over Chaos!” and the great man laughed merrily. “The young dog has tickled my vanity. I do hope he isn’t a flatterer.”

He was not a flatterer. He told Mr Burgoyne that he plainly detected indications of long-continued *waste of time*. All round the big room there were signs of leakage: tiny vents through which the precious moments were dribbling. It was astonishing how, in one week, he had grasped the main principles and the most intricate developments of Mr Burgoyne’s working system. The room and the work were really one. If you understood one, you understood the other: Mr Stone understood both most completely, as though by instinct.

All these big portfolios—dozens of them—lying in drawers in this great press contained the notes: the marvellous notes of a lifetime’s unceasing thought and painful search. This was the store-house of ascertained facts and digested, docketed, codified law products. Quite so. Well, there was nothing wrong with the portfolios except this: the front of the drawers should be converted into hinged flaps. Any decent cabinet-maker—there ought to be one in the village—could effect this change. Precious moments would be saved in dropping flaps instead of pulling out drawers.

Now with regard to all these question-and-answer cards! Oh yes, that was obvious. These were sent out to all likely quarters when Mr Burgoyne was seeking first-hand statistics under any head. The colour of the printed cards indicated the subject, or group of subjects, of course. For instance, as Mr Stone observed, red was, roughly, biology; green, sociology. Well, a lot of the answers were sheer waste of time to read—obviously the information was not first-hand but copied out of books. These correspondents had thought only of their own reputation and, in dread lest the great man should all unconsciously put them on an everlasting pillory by citing them in footnotes as authorities, they had flown to the latest text books. “Who is Wren?” asked Mr Stone, abruptly.

Wren, said Mrs Burgoyne, was their neighbour, the clever doctor who was good enough to interest himself in the distribution now and then of red cards.

"Wren knows what he is about, but he has got into a groove," said Mr Stone. "And he seems never to have heard of half the German hospitals."

Kind Dr Wren, it seemed, was responsible for the loss of many moments.

All these books on the close-packed shelves were—it went without saying—Mr Burgoyne's working tools, and the desirable thing, of course, was to keep his tools ready to his hand. But his assistants should introduce method into the arrangement of his tools; the books should be kept moving on the shelves. Those two small adjoining rooms, instead of being employed as mere overflow reservoirs, should be made a sifting department. Mr Burgoyne's books, moving from year to year as they grew old and exhausted—if they ever did become exhausted—and in accord with the fluctuating character of their importance when considered in relation to the work itself, should pass slowly round Mr Burgoyne's big room and out into the back of the sifting department. Mr Burgoyne, like all great workmen, worked with few tools: it should be easy to arrange.

Assistants should not, merely because they were assistants, be careless of their moments. Mrs Burgoyne, who was really the secretary, no matter what other aid her husband had received, must take up typewriting. She would find typewriting quite an amusement. Some lithographed letter forms should be obtained for replying to manifestly impertinent and foolish strangers. With pain Mr Stone had calculated an average waste per morning of forty-three minutes of Mrs Burgoyne's own time when dealing with the day's post.

Thus Mr Stone, looking about the room with dark eyes, had seen the moments dribbling away in all directions.

Filling one of the large window recesses there was a strange and untidy collection of what the household called Mr Burgoyne's toys. On either side was a capacious toy cupboard

with many drawers, and between the cupboards, just below the window, ran three stout shelves, on which one might see jam pots, bottles of chemicals, cardboard boxes, zinc trays with leaves and buds floating in slimy liquids, glass-prisons wherein poor little weeds were kept under anaesthetics during protracted operations, and what not fantastic, messy, and inexplicable. The fact was that Mr Burgoyne seemed to enjoy checking things, going over old ground with little ingeniously-contrived experiments, making good other people's work ; and it was odd how often he made it bad. Like Darwin, he was not clever with his fingers, but he was surprisingly inventive and ingenious.

All this summer, as he played with his toys, plant tissues had formed the basis of his amusement. Morbid growths, light and heat as unhealthy stimulus, etc., etc., had seemed all his thought as he played with his toys, when perhaps all the time, if one knew, his real thought had not been of diseased plant tissue, but of diseased brain tissue. But, whatever he was really thinking of, he plainly derived pleasure from watching the manipulative skill of Mr Stone when set to work in the window. He stood as one spell-bound while Mr Stone cut microscopic sections, or rubbed his hands in delight as Mr Stone performed his task on the dissecting board and beneath the lens pithed out reticulated vessels, or separated membrane from wall in the minute stem of a dandelion or common groundsel. The young man's dexterous precision was really charming.

In the experiments themselves, Mr Stone's assistance proved invaluable. The gardener had brought his master half-a-dozen tender young seedling wall-flowers in pots, and Mr Burgoyne was subjecting *Cheiranthus Cheiri* to studied persecution : retarding, stimulating, poisoning, mutilating, remorselessly tormenting. One pot formed the stage of a marvellous toy, in the construction of which Mr Stone surpassed himself. The idea was to entomb the unhappy plant in a cardboard dungeon, or "a little ease," and hold it in darkness—save for one shoot, above which the sunlight was to be introduced through a paper

window-shaft. Thus all the energy of the victim would be directed towards hasty cell-construction in order to reach the light: the plant would, as it were, stand on tiptoe and almost break its back in its endeavours to attain this warped elongation. Then, with cotton threads, miniature pulleys, and weights running in slots, a cap was to be neatly fitted upon the growing-point, and the wretched plant would be compelled to measure for all observers the desperate strength expended in this abnormal effort. Really it was a pretty, if a cruel, toy.

Stone seemed to shut his dark eyes and blink from admiration as Mr Burgoyne unfolded his little plots. He could not in a hundred years have invented such ruses, but he carried them through grandly.

There was no doubt of Stone's sincere admiration. He spoke of it to no one at the Lodge, but he spoke of it to Dr Wren, and found this gentleman to be quite of his mind. Dr Wren, when invited to the Lodge, was, in fact, as proud as if he had been going to dine with a king. He welcomed young Mr Stone at his snug little house at the top of Harbour Street, and, during long, shoppy talks of an evening over their pipes in the library-surgery, showed himself an unexpectedly strong man for a seaside doctor, even if he was ignorant of the latest achievements of the German hospitals.

"I call it a privilege," said Wren, puffing hard at his big wooden pipe, "to sit in the same room with him—just to see him, and hear him speak—on any subject. But to work with him—day after day! Stone, honestly, I think you are one of the luckiest men in England."

"That's what I thought," said Stone, "at first."

"At first?"

"Yes. I'll tell you what I mean. You know he has been extraordinarily kind to me. He has given me praise altogether disproportionate to the extent of my feeble services."

"Yes," said Wren gravely: as though this might well be, "that is his way always. But he means all he says—it is a part of his greatness to—to make the best of all lesser things."

"Well," said Stone, "it has almost overwhelmed me; but it

has set me thinking. Suppose—he has not said it—but suppose he says he would like me to stay on—stay for good."

"You'll stay, of course."

"I think so, but it would mean the end of everything—the end of all my dreams, Wren. My ambition—my career——"

"Ah," said Wren, "your career. Yes—your career. Yes, to be sure," and his strong voice became soft and low, as if a sad thought or fancy had come unbidden to his mind, and he put his pipe back into his mouth and puffed very hard indeed.

He was a solid, fair man of about thirty-five: a big, strong man; and, as he sat smoking his old pipe, he seemed to be saying with unspoken words: "Careers. Yes. We all begin life with that tale, don't we? Careers, oh yes! But what do we make of them—even the strongest of us—in the end?"

Stone, improving in health every day, remained at the Lodge for another month, by arrangement; then week after week, indefinitely. Then, one evening after dinner, Mr Burgoyne said the words that his guest had expected to hear.

"I only wish, Stone, that I could keep you here always."

"You can, sir, if you will."

"My dear fellow, I should like to, but I doubt if it would be fair to you."

Then, of a sudden flushing, young Mr Stone spoke with deep enthusiasm. What better work could he hope to do than this—assist Mr Burgoyne in the very slightest degree?

"You have assisted me in the highest degree. But I should not—unless, perhaps, for one consideration—be justified in accepting what might be a sacrifice—of much that is dear to you—the hope of better things, for instance. Every man has his own work to do—not another man's."

He looked at his guest very kindly, and his voice was full of kindness, but he seemed to look through the young man as though he could not help doing so; he seemed to be giving words to the young man's secret thoughts because they were so transparently obvious that unconsciously he gave expression to them. It was as though in a moment he had laid Stone

out beneath his great thought-microscope, and in one glance had explored the innermost mysteries of what was, after all, a very simple organism.

"Take another month," said Mr Burgoyne, rising from the table, "to consider it. Take a month to make up your mind."

"I have made up my mind now, sir."

"No; I can't have you decide till another month has passed. Weigh it all carefully, Stone—as though it was not yourself—but somebody else. Take advice. Ask Wren. Yes; talk it over with Wren. I have a great opinion of Wren," and he laid his hand on Stone's shoulder. "Why not ask Wren to give you a good overhauling? There is this one consideration, my dear fellow. The sacrifice of your natural hopes may be balanced by the escape from many perils—perils to your health, I mean. Ask Wren how you stand. Are you ready for the battle of life, or should you avoid it?"

In this final month Stone had many talks with his new friend Wren: talking to him with as complete a freedom as though Wren had been an old friend instead of a new one. Wren was a "thorough good sort:" you could not talk to him for long without being convinced of the fact. He was not showy, or brilliant in his work; but he was sound and strong, and much deeper than you could at first anticipate. Indeed, you might probe very deep into Wren's mental storehouse without reaching its floor.

"You'll stay, of course?" said Wren again.

"Yes; I want to stay."

"That's right," said Wren, cheerfully. "You know, you may be sure of one thing—you won't have to complain as to salary. I never heard what he gave Edmundson and the others, but he is always princely in money matters."

"I haven't given a thought to the money."

"That's right," said Wren. "I didn't suppose you were mercenary. I only wanted to tell you about *him*, in case you didn't know. You need have no uneasiness about taking whatever he offers, because he is, I imagine, a really rich man."

"Is he?"

"You see how simply he lives. Well, I imagine that his income must always have been greater than his expenditure, and in all these years there would be accumulations. He is splendid about money—princely, as I said: yet with no contempt for it; treating it as what it is—latent energy."

And Dr Wren spoke of some occasions on which Richard Burgoyne had converted an idle bank balance into an active force: as, for instance, his endowment of a professorial chair at Oxford, that additional ward in the St Saviour hospital, or the London and Durham Research Studentships.

It was not, however, without hesitation—in spite of his friendly, confidential feeling—that Stone at last acted on the great man's advice and asked Dr Wren to overhaul him.

"Wren, old chap, I wish you'd run your yard measure over me and tell me exactly what you think. . . . Will you? It's awfully decent of you to let me give you all this trouble. I feel as fit as can be now—but I want to *know*."

"Trouble, what nonsense," said Wren. "But wouldn't it be as well to slip up to London and let one of the big wigs do the trick for you? Wouldn't it be wiser to let old Reece have a go at you? My yard measure is very much at your service, but can you trust it?"

"Yes," said Stone. "I trust you—more than Reece and all the big wigs. I don't want to let the world into my confidence—and I'll take your opinion against the lot of them—because I think you are a friend, and because I think you are a thundering good doctor."

Upon receipt of this handsome compliment Wren insisted on shaking hands. If he had detected in his young friend, at the beginning of their acquaintance, a certain loftiness of tone, or a mental attitude that indicated conscious superiority in all matters relating, however remotely, to "shop"—if he had for a little while faintly resented an arrogance as of highly-trained physiologist in converse with muddling general practitioner, all such cause for complaint was now very handsomely wiped out.

"No time like the present," said Wren, cheerily. "Come

into the other room, my boy, and you shall hear all that Whitebridge-on-Sea can tell you."

After a very careful examination, the seaside doctor told the brilliant pupil of the famous Reece that he was sound. Dr Wren was "cocksure of it"; he had no doubts of any sort: the young man, considered as a machine, had temporarily stopped going because it had been foolishly over-driven, but there was absolutely nothing wrong with the works. John Stone might return to the battle-field of life to-morrow: if he desired to do so. He was not a constitutionally strong man—certainly not; but he was as strong as many a staunch fighter. And yet Dr Wren still advised him to stay where he was.

"Look here," said Wren, and he laid his hand on the young man's shoulder as though in imitation of Mr Burgoyne. "What are the chances against you—against the cleverest of us—making this career that we all talk about? A million to one, eh?"

"Long odds, anyhow."

"Quite a million to one. When you and I speak of a successful career, we don't mean Harley Street and a front and back parlour, and two thousand a year in bad years and four thousand a year in good years—we don't mean that, do we? No, by Jove, we mean doing solid work—doing some piece of work that no other man can do, except ourselves."

"That's about it."

"Something good, something real—not bosh and bunkum, however highly paid. Well then, it's a million to one against us. Money, yes! If you want to make money, go back. If you have relations dependent on you——"

"I haven't a relation I care a damn for, or one who cares a damn for me."

"Then stay where you know you can do the useful work. You mayn't have money, you mayn't have fame, but you ought to be able to sleep comfortably in your bed at night if you know you have helped old Burgoyne one inch farther along the road he is making for all mankind. No one may know you have done it, but *you* will know—and that'll be

something real—something *done*, not talked about or dreamt about, but *done*."

"Yes, I'll stay."

"Look here. Look at me. I've dreamed the dream, of course," and Dr Wren's hand shook as he filled his old pipe and let his coarse-cut tobacco tumble about upon the surgery floor. "Why, good Lord, I was full of it—stuffed up with it, when I had to choose—to renounce—to make the sacrifice. My father died—and it seemed my duty to come down here and go on with his practice—for the sake of my mother and my two sisters."

"You chucked everything for that?"

"Yes, and in two years my poor old mother was dead, and both my sisters were married—to men of means, and I sat here, left in the cart, eating out my heart because it had been a *useless* sacrifice. They could have done very well without me. There would have been enough for the two years if I had let the practice go to the devil."

"Rough luck!"

"By Jove, as I sat thinking about it, I thought there had been nothing like it since the Crucifixion. . . . Well, I don't even regret it now. I am a willing, contented martyr. I am surer of myself now than I ever should have been. I have learnt what dreams are and what facts are. If I had given my mother my ticket in a lottery that had a million subscribers—for her sake had renounced my chance of the grand prize—no one could have said I was insanely generous, could they? Well, that's all I gave her—my lottery ticket," and Dr Wren laughed, and brushed his hand across his eyes—to keep the smoke out of them.

"And I," said Stone, "will give old Burgoyne my lottery ticket," and he too laughed, and then blew his nose—because the smoke had tickled it.

In this manner young John Stone became a permanent member of the family at the Lodge.

IV

M^R BURGOYNE was engaged upon his *Framework of Life*.

Day after day—week days, Sundays—week after week, through the changing seasons, through the gliding year, the quiet work went on in the quiet room. Each morning the assistants took their accustomed places—Mrs Burgoyne at her desk near the French windows, Mr Stone at his desk near the window recess that contained the toy cupboards; and each morning they both glanced with doubt and apprehension at the pile of letters, pamphlets, circulars, etc., on the table near the door. Would the morning's post be easy or difficult?

So often it happened that he, the master-worker, was called off the work by a request that he could not refuse, and Mr Stone was forced to watch long hours, instead of moments, leaking away. Sometimes they were lucky, and morning after morning the assistants smiled at each other as the last letter was opened and the post-bag shown to have contained nothing dangerous—that is to say, nothing that they, the assistants, could not themselves deal with. Then the luck would turn and the calls seemed incessant. Now it is Vivisection: a letter to *The Times* that must be written. One of the great lights has said that he should speak. A final word is needed from him on this, that, or the other burning question. Now it is a demand for letters that have come to him years ago. He must hunt all the morning for those friendly notes from the worker whose work has been stopped by death. Sorrowing friends are busy with the Biography and they want all materials as rapidly as may be possible. So he sits reading old letters in front of the big press wherein lie private correspondence as well as the famous portfolios.

"No, I can't send them this," and he smiles as he puts back a letter.

They are splendid, such letters as these, from the other lights—the real lights. Here is a contemptuous mention of Professor Jenner Cox—the sham light. A man of the fourth magnitude, this Professor Jenner Cox, who pushes himself forward, fills columns in the daily press with bumptious criticism. So soon as a great man is dead, he claims equality and friendship, bursts into vainglorious reminiscence—"Another of us gone," and so forth. Thus he bulks large in the public eye, building his spurious reputation. But thus it is when the strong clear light is turned upon him, as the living great ones write to one another: "Do you see they have put that ass, . . . on the Royal Commission?" So the sentence will appear, with the blank, some day in one of the big men's biographies. Then, some day, the name will be put into the blank and, to all who know, the sham reputation will be blown away. The great men could prick the bubble now, but they are too great. They have work to do.

Mr Burgoyne's working place is, in all seasons, on the window side of the broad hearth, with his back to the light. Here he sits in a deep leather arm-chair, a writing board upon his knee, surrounded by his books—on table, on chair-seats, on the floor—with the faces of his friends smiling down upon him. Above the shelves on this side of the room the pictures of his friends—photographs and engravings in plain black frames—form a much prized collection. Nearly all bear autograph inscriptions: all of them have been given to him by the friends themselves. Many of the friends he has not seen except as here in portraits. W. K. Clifford, Huxley, Tyndall, Lubbock, etc.—it is a glorious picture gallery between hearth and window. Here is Ernst Haeckel, staring and resolute, with bold penmanship: "To Richard Burgoyne, friend and fellow-labourer"; here is Jean Cerisier, with pointed, angular characters, "à Burgoyne, notre maître à tous"; here Alexander Bain, in full rectorial pomp, gown and collar; and so on. But the post of honour is the space above the mantel held by

the largest picture in the collection : portrait of a thin, bent man—who stands bareheaded, and, wrapped in his long cloak, holds a slouch hat in hidden hands as he looks upon his friend with a wonderful, enigmatical, yet most kindly smile.

Leaning forward in his big chair, when that tiresome morning's post is done with, the owner of the room scribbles, in pencil nearly always ; or, leaning back in the chair, he dictates. This is the settled method of production. Mr Stone transcribes the pencilled writing ; Mrs Burgoyne takes the dictation. Then the master works upon the clean manuscript ; then it is typewritten by Miss Gregory, spinster cousin of the vicar, down in the village ; then the master works again on the typed copy—and then the little stream of gold is there. So small—matter for one printed page a good day's work. It seems impossible that thus—so little in a day—he yet can build his monument of precious metal.

In the order of the hours, correction comes first and then, production ; the typed matter, then the manuscript, then the scrape of the marvellous pencil, or the grave, slow tones of the word-weighing yet inspired voice.

There are rare days when the pencil flies, driving on fast, filling the small sheets, four, five, six of them, ere it stops abruptly—the gold flowing out in a molten, rapid stream. But such days are very rare. What Stone has learned to look for is so little, so very little, that every time he thinks of it his wonder deepens. Can it be that thus are built such monuments ?

Stone thinks of it and speaks of it to Wren again and again. As he stoops over his desk busily transcribing, or verifying the references, or sorting out and tabulating the vast mass of collected data from which are drawn those footnotes to each printed page of the completed books, he is filled with the wonder of the work itself. How is it done ? Measuring the greater by the less, comparing such work with common work, how best might one form a clear conception of the process by which day after day in this silent room the work goes on ? Through all the months of preparation, throughout the long

building up of plan, in all the time, as now, of creation, whence comes the impetus, what are the guides that govern and control the work?

To Stone it seems that in the preparation stage, his employer takes little trouble, never worries, never urges himself to concentrated effort. He is like a man labouring in darkness below the ground, knowing intuitively that as he mines and quarries he is never far from the right line. An inner sense, some latent adjustment had served him, would always serve him. Long use had made him easy as he toiled thus in the dark—in the vast thought-cavern filled with the débris of dead thought: the confused rubbish heaps left by other men's work. And he seemed to know when the cavern walls were wearing thin. Here the drill again: here the pick again: such little blows against the prison walls—the mountain walls of immemorial ignorance—tap, tap, tap—thinner, thinner. He *knows*. Then “Stand back!” A last shower of crumbling rubbish, and the light pours in—the good light of day. Never again will men be held in *this* thought-prison.

But outwardly, it is nothing at all. A quiet, painstaking man muddling over trifles: a kind old man not particularly quick, although possessed of much simple shrewdness; astonishingly facile in conviction, apparently; respectful to the opinion of others; really, perhaps, attaching no more importance to the opinion of a man of science than to the opinion of a cab-driver.

“Stone, I wonder if old Kendrick was right about the snake bite and motor reflexes? The dear old boy was so mighty confident that no one ever seems to have questioned him,” and he looks round and smiles benignly at his assistants. “I have wondered about it before. I believe I made a note once. Stone, I do wish you would hunt out that note for me.”

Then the storehouse is visited; the orderly storehouse is explored; the necessary portfolio is brought forth, and the note is found.

“Sixty-three! Bless me! As long ago as that?” and Mr Burgoyne reads the note. “Quite insufficient evidence. Com-

pare Kendrick's cat and Chandler's Madagascar lemurs? . . . Oh yes, it comes back to me. The old boy based the whole theory on one series of experiments"; and he reads again. "*Vide 245-6-7. Quain's Anatomy. Rigg's Artificial Stimulation of Reflexes,*" etc., etc.

And then all these carefully annotated books are dragged down from the shelves and he reads here and there, slowly—very slowly—while the others go on with their tasks.

"Honestly, Stone, I believe it is just bosh."

"Do you, sir?"

"Well, look here. It's very unlikely—to begin with; and why on earth should the left side, give more response than the right? . . . Thomas or Hibbert or Crane would put one straight. They have all been working this ground. I am so horribly rusty. How can we find out? Can you suggest anyone, Stone? Do you think Reece could help us? It would save time if someone would tell us exactly what has been done—bring us *up-to-date*, as they call it nowadays."

It is a week's work—a fortnight's work—three weeks' work off and on, swamping everything, becoming the main task now—to settle and despatch old Kendrick's foolish cat. And after all, what is it—either way? What in the name of reason can the motor reflexes and snake bites have to do with the distribution of flora in the Tahiti archipelago, which was the line last month?

This is how it is done, *outwardly*. Assistants walk as in a maze, going back down the parallel path: back, back, almost to the door at which they entered, before the opening appears and they find a path that leads them forward—lucky, too, if this new path do not prove a no-thoroughfare.

But, *inwardly*, when the great thoughts are coming it would seem almost like this. Dr Wren has this theory as to the best work of the great man in the leather arm-chair. He sits calmly presiding while the dead men work. Not otherwise could the intuition be explained. We are what the dead men made us. We are bound fast to the long hand-in-hand chain of our vanished ancestors; and in us the dead men's thoughts are

latent. We, the living, contain all the dead, from the glimmer in the ooze, upward, onward, to this last link in the chain—ourselves. For *him* the dead men work—now one, now another, now a busy workshop of them: all these forgotten progenitors who have helped to make him what he is are helping still. These are his real assistants: the alchemist, the astrologer; the sailor, the explorer; the dead man who died in torment while his savage captors danced by the glare of the camp fire; the dead man who gave his life fighting nature in the swamps; fierce soldiers, brooding lawyers—they work and whisper while he sits serene, combining their efforts, ordering their force.

Stone, stooping over his desk, reading what the pencil has just said, is sometimes convinced that Wren's theory must be accepted. Not otherwise can the master mind have garnered this particular scrap of knowledge. And Stone raises his head and glances at the big chair by the hearth, with something nearer to superstitious wonder than he has felt for many years.

Sometimes, young Mr Stone's glance rests for a moment on his fellow-assistant—his patient, unwearying, fellow-drudge. Sometimes, but very rarely, his dark eyes discover that Mrs Burgoyne is for the moment "slacking." She has run her fingers round the soft white neck-collar to resettle it; has been thoughtfully pulling down the end of her little lace scarf; or with an open palm has been smoothing back the heavy hair from her temples; and now she is looking out of the window—eyes fixed, lips just parted—as she watches a blackbird or a thrush hop and peck across the well-mowed grass. Seen thus, she seems like a good and pretty school-girl—so patient and so wise, and yet not quite immune from vagrant school thoughts which lead by tortuous paths to nonsense and to play time.

Suddenly, perhaps, she becomes conscious that the dark eyes are observing her, and turns with the frank and unembarrassed smile of comradeship: as who should say "Yes. Am I not naughty to be so idle?" Then, with the curious child-like shake of the head that already he knows so well,

she picks up her pen and resumes her task. A graceful and a gracious schoolgirl, who really loves her school because she loves the master of the school, and who could not really slack because slacking would seem treachery.

Thus the long, quiet morning—filled with the quiet work—wears on, until with a jerk, as of wound-up clockwork unexpectedly stopping, Mr Burgoyne abruptly lays down book, board, or tabulated sheet. He has worked to the limit of his physical power and must rest. Immediately he sinks down and stretches himself at full length on the vast leather couch that stands on the side of the hearth opposite to his chair. Mrs Burgoyne covers him to the shoulders with a light grey rug if it be summer, or a heavy grey rug if it be winter, and then reads aloud to him from *The Times* newspaper for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. After twenty minutes—never more—he is thoroughly refreshed: the clockwork has rewound itself: he rises from the sofa alert and eager, ready and longing for his Sybil to take him for the invariable, undeviating morning walk.

There was one day in all the year on which it was understood that no work was to be done by Mr and Mrs Burgoyne. This was the 15th of November: the anniversary of their wedding: a date to be for ever honoured with high holiday. It was Mr Burgoyne's custom on the eve of this festival to go down into the village and purchase a little present for his wife—card case, watch in leather bracelet, coat cover, or clock to fasten upon the bicycle—anything that would come as a pleasant surprise to the recipient; and in order to accomplish his purpose he habitually manœuvred his wife out of the way. To make the surprise complete, it was of course necessary that she should be kept ignorant of what was in progress. Understanding this necessity, she lent herself easily to his will, and never protested when dismissed from his company on the slenderest pretext. When—the operation completed—she was again admitted to his company, and perhaps plainly saw the brown paper parcel, with an envelope under

the string, lying on the ledge of the bookcase near his chair, she was careful to seem unconscious of its existence. If she spoke of it, where would be the surprise? To-morrow morning, on the breakfast-table, the parcel would be lying by her plate. Then would be the moment of surprise: but not now.

To-day, however, she had forgotten it was the 14th of November.

"You and Stone," said Mr Burgoyne, "should go for a good spin on your wheels this afternoon. The roads must be in fine condition after these winds. You must have a good long ride."

"But what will *you* do?"

"Oh, I shall amuse myself very well. I think I will take a little stroll before tea. I will ask Effie to go with me."

"No, I'll come with you. Effie shall go for the ride, and I'll go for the walk with you. Effie will enjoy the ride, and I would rather——"

"Effie will not mind going with me just for once," and Mr Burgoyne smiled, and his blue eyes twinkled with an almost roguish enjoyment of the deception he was practising. "In fact I have asked Effie, and she does not mind."

Then Mrs Burgoyne remembered that it was the 14th of November, and meekly submitted to be dismissed for the afternoon. Of course he wanted Effie to assist him in selecting the surprise.

After luncheon Mr Burgoyne, with his fellow-conspirator, waited until the bicyclists had been safely despatched on their journey, and then, hastily putting on his loose cape, he was at once eager to sally forth.

Behind the house the ground dropped sharply and there was a sheltered hollow where trees grew well. On the other side of this snug little valley the chalk cliff rose again in curious terraces, with intermediate grass slopes, until the flat down or tableland of open country was reached. On the crest of this inner cliff stood the first of the windmills which, like a line of sentinels, guarded the hedgeless fields and the five or six miles of broad high road as it crossed the down.

A path led one through the hollow to red brick steps, down which one could plunge into a sunk lane; then by more red brick steps one plunged again, until, through a miniature labyrinth of fishermen's cottages, one emerged into the coal-stained roadway by Harbour Wall. This was the short cut from the Lodge to the village, and it was by this route that Mr Burgoyne and his niece plunged down to their secret task.

"Look," said Mr Burgoyne, as they walked beneath the bare branches of chestnut and beech. "Some wind still!" and he pointed upward to the slowly moving sails of the windmill. "Not too much for bicycling, I hope—not enough to tire your aunt."

"Oh no," said Effie. "*Some* wind is fun. If you've *no* wind you can't have the wind behind you. Don't be afraid, Uncle. And Jack is so sensible—he would never let her do too much."

"That's right. Stone is indeed wise, beyond his years—always considerate"; and they hurried along the path, prattling most cheerfully. "See, Effie—empty seats, vacant thickets: no lovers' walk to-day, is it? No loving couples proving their affection at the expense of their good manners."

"No, Uncle Richard. That's a comfort, isn't it?"

In the tourist season the cool and shady paths were much affected by humble visitors who seemed to think that arms round waists were the best and most natural ornament to young ladies figures. Effie, who loved this rapid descent to shops or pier, had complained that the vulgar tourists debarred her from using it when she most wanted to use it—in the burning summer-time.

"Uncle, see——" This was as they came out among the hanging nets and the piled eel-baskets behind the cottages—"there goes Miss Granger—in a new dress. I am certain that it's a new dress. Oh, do you think she is trying to find Dr Wren to let him see how smart she is?"

"Well, my dear—in strict confidence—I shouldn't wonder if she was."

Tall Miss Granger, who lived with her mother near the coast-guard station on the far side of the harbour, was, or at least had been, the belle of Whitebridge. She was as well known to all the world as the swing-bridge, the pier-light, or the great Mr Burgoyne himself—and indeed had been thus famous for twelve or more years. Many were the little jokes, known to all the world, that had poor Miss Granger for base and starting impetus.

“See how she is hurrying—do you think she’ll catch him ?”

“Well, Effie—and this also is in confidence—I should not be surprised if she did catch him—one of these days,” and the philosopher chuckled tolerantly and benignantly.

Fishermen showed their teeth in a friendly grin, and touched their woollen caps ; old women nodded, and children curtseyed : it was a pleasant progress through friendly faces. But half-way down Harbour Wall Effie frowned. Uncle Richard was about to be stopped by the most insufferable man in Whitebridge—the most insufferable man in Europe, perhaps. So Effie thought : Uncle did not mind him.

“Hi,” called Mr Ingle, the hairdresser, from the steps of his haircutting saloon, “hi, sir—surely you’re not going by ? Sir !”

John Stone loathed Mr Ingle. Dr Wren used to say that he lived in fear lest one day he should lose control of himself and kick Mr Ingle all down Harbour Wall and round the corner into Pier Street. But really and truly Mr Ingle meant no harm. It was the consciousness of this fact that tied your tongue and paralysed your arm or foot when you sat in one of Mr Ingle’s velvet chairs and suffered. He meant no harm. It was this fact—understood by Mr Burgoyne more clearly than the rest—that enabled the philosopher to sit in the velvet chair without suffering at all.

And Mr Ingle was devoted to Mr Burgoyne—loved him and revered him for his *common-sense*. “That’s what I pride myself on,” the hairdresser used to tell his customers ; “and that’s what I admire in him—quite apart from his position——” When Ingle was about to move from his old premises in Pier Street

to the existing site of the saloon, he came up to the Lodge and asked Mr Burgoyne for his advice in the matter. "This is a serious thing to me," said Mr Ingle. "Moving a business like mine is touch and go. I ain't satisfied with Pier Street—not for many reasons—the street never has carried the trade it ought; but I don't want to go and make a fool of myself. Now I ask you to tell me candid how it strikes you."

"Ingle," Mr Burgoyne had replied, with becoming seriousness. "Candidly, I hesitate to advise—I can only do so on broad principles. But this much does occur to me. In Pier Street you are near the railway station; in the Wall you will be near the sea.—"

"Just so."

"But travellers by railway come from towns, from luxurious surroundings, all modern amenities—including hair-dressing saloons: whereas those who land from ships—small ships especially—have necessarily been deprived of many comforts. I would say, therefore, that these should be more in need of haircutting, shaving—"

"That's enough for me," cried Ingle. "That's common-sense. That's what I came up for," and he made the move; and, as he told his customers, had never regretted it.

Now, this afternoon, stopping his adviser, he looked at him searchingly. "Let me have a good look at you, sir. Yes. That's all right. You'll do till next week. But early next week I shall expect you. A man in your position should never neglect his hair—no, nor his beard either."

"I will not fail, Ingle, but I can't stop now."

Effie in disgust had been looking out to sea, refusing even to be aware of Mr Ingle's presence; but, as they passed on, the intolerable man called after her.

"And miss! You jog his memory. He has more to think of than you and me. Bring him down Monday, if you can."

In a few steps they met Mr Townley, the vicar, and with him they exchanged bows. At the corner they exchanged bows with Mrs Garret, Mrs Kilner, and other Whitebridge residents. But with Mr Allen, the red-haired solicitor, on the other side of

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the street, although he seemed ready for the exchange, Effie would exchange no bow: because he had once been rude to Uncle—in a letter about the maintenance of the lane between the cliff gardens—and he was, according to Effie, never, never to be pardoned for his offence if he lived to a hundred years and more. Then, at last, they turned into Mr Hind's stationery and fancy store, and began to look for the present.

In their careful scrutiny, Mr Hind, stationer *and* printer, would render no assistance, but would talk of the coloured inquiry cards which he printed for Mr Burgoyne.

"I've been thinking a lot about those cards, sir. And I've an idea for you, sir. Have a double perforated card—what anyone can tear off the answering half, pop on 'apeny stamp and there you are. As I understand the printed matter, an answer is what you require.—"

Mr Burgoyne, at the counter, examining all the pretty things with a childlike admiration of the ingenuity and taste displayed in their manufacture, gave Mr Hind only a divided attention.

"I—doubt if that would quite do—I think—my correspondents would require more space."

"But sir, you don't grasp my idea. I'd have one half the card blank. If you will step into my room, I'll show you exactly what I mean. In a sense it's just a postcard that I mean. What would travel for the 'apeny stamp."

"Effie," whispered Mr Burgoyne, "has your aunt a photograph frame?"

"O Uncle Richard, of course she has—dozens and dozens."

"What I propose," said Mr Hind, "won't affect the colour of the cards."

"I am much obliged to you, Hind, but I think we won't make any change. Really, the answers I desire are best in closed envelopes. . . . Effie! How about a card case?"

For a moment Mr Hind seemed badly huffed.

"Oh, very well, sir. But what happens half the time—I daresay? You don't get an answer at all. When, if it was just to burst a perforation and write, Yes or No, and put on 'apeny

stamp, you'd get your answers. But you know best, sir. It was only an idea."

"Effie! This box! . . . The truth is, Hind, I am pre-occupied—but much obliged to you. We'll go into it another time, eh?"

Then Mr Hind, mollified, smiled again.

Mr Burgoyne stood for a long time fascinated by three ebony pigs that moved on a slide in and out of a white metal sty. He knew that this would not do for his wife, but he admired it so greatly that he begged his niece to accept it. But Effie, resolutely refusing and forcing him to tear himself away from the pigs, finally decided that a certain oxidised silver ink-pot was the most agreeable surprise in all Mr Hind's stock of fancy articles.

"I am sure you are right, Effie, I am sure you are right."

Then, carrying the parcel under his cape, Mr Burgoyne turned homeward, and with slow footsteps climbed up the gentle slopes on the sea-front. His task was accomplished; he had been stimulated by the pleasurable excitement of the secret task; but now, with the work done, he was plainly tired. They had come down by the sharp descent with quick footsteps and prattling tongues, but they went up the easy path towards the red sunset very slowly and in silence.

Miles away, the bicyclists with redly flashing wheels were speeding homeward towards the western glow. They had been for a really long ride—across the down to Bratford, over the river to Appleford, over the hill to Gainsgrave, round by Bevis Castle, where lived the great Lord Frodsham, and back through Moorhouse and Slanes to the down and the windmills again. Mrs Burgoyne, bright-eyed and flushed, leaning forward over the handles, rode up the last long hill until, after being painful, riding became impossible, and it was as though the machine itself cried "enough" and abruptly dismounted her.

"Splendid," she said, after glancing at her watch-bracelet. "Loads of time—You were quite right. I should never have forgiven you if we hadn't got back in time for tea. . . . No. Certainly not."

Mr Stone, as always, desired to push her bicycle as well as his own up the hills. But this aid she would never accept. She was enough trouble to her pilot, she used to say, without shirking.

"Let go, please. I wouldn't think of it," and she resolutely pushed on, trudging ahead of her companion with long, free strides.

"Sure it's not been too much for you—sure you are not tired?"

"Not a little bit," said Mrs Burgoyne. "I have loved it—but it would have spoilt everything if we had been late for tea."

In her bicycle costume—short skirt, white jersey, leather belt, and woollen cap—she looked quite amazingly young. There was youth in the voice, in gesture and in pose, in the dark-brown hair rolled on the nape of her firm neck, in the jaunty carriage of cap and feather, in the flat back, the slender waist, full strong hips, and above all in the freedom of the swinging stride.

"I believe you are tired yourself," and as she turned to look back at him half way up the hill, in her laugh and in her eyes there was youth—youth amazing and incredible if one remembered that to-morrow would be the eleventh anniversary of her marriage to Mr Burgoyne.

Really, this afternoon, she was like a schoolgirl out of school—a nice, good schoolgirl who has worked hard and well, and who can without remorse enjoy her play-hour.

At the top of the hill they paused for a minute: all before them was easy going, with such wind as there was at their backs. No wind was perceptible where they stood, in the shelter of the chalk ridge that rose above the level of the road on their right hand, but high over their heads the heavy sails of the great windmill were moving, and making a heavy clatter and rumble.

On their left lay the long wide valley that divided the down country—peaceful, silent flats, through which the sluggish river crept, while it twisted, to the sea. By the river, twisting

and writhing as though in imitation, ran the railway line—showing little toy bridges, gates and level crossings, and a little toy train that mixed its white smoke with the white mists of the marshy fields. Far ahead one saw the wide cleft in the cliffs, the small nestling town, roofs and church tower melting into greyness, harbour and boats and pier nearly lost already in the grey dusk. So peaceful, so peaceful as one gazed at it, that its peace seemed to fill one's heart. A beautiful evening in truth—such a glorious sky: with one star shining clear, and one little twinkling star that has fallen into the sea and is now the pierhead light, as Stone knows. Silence and unruffled calm in sky and on land and sea—nothing of movement but the great sails above their heads, driven by the wonderful, unseen force of the wind that down here they do not feel.

"Now," said Mrs Burgoyne. "Go on. Tell me when we can coast, but don't look round."

Mr Stone, as a careful pilot, would look round to see that his charge was safe, and when he did this he used to make the most dangerous swerves. He was, therefore, always implored not to do it. To-night he was obedient, and they swept along the clean, dry roads swiftly and securely. Once or twice he called to her, but he never turned his head.

"All right?"

"Yes. I'm close behind you. Go on."

In the lamplit porch at home she looked once more at her watch-bracelet. She was flushed and warm, but happy—triumphant on having ridden so far and so well. "You were quite right. We have done it." In the firelit cheerful drawing-room the tea things were on the table; in the light of the candles in the workroom, Mr Burgoyne was reading while he rested on the big sofa. As she stooped over him and kissed his forehead, she saw it: wrapt in brown paper, with a directed envelope beneath the string—her surprise.

Her eyes danced and her lips twitched, but she did not seem to see it. No—that would have spoilt the surprise.

V

IN their uneventful life, very small jokes were made to do large service. For example: the joke about Stone's new suit of clothes, and the joke about Dr Wren and Miss Evelyn Granger.

Mr Stone, although never a sloven, was very far from being what is technically termed "a dressy man." Neatness and unobtrusiveness formed the keynote in his plan of costume. Once, however, he went away to London and ordered a fashionable suit. It was cut in a sporting style, and when he put it on no one knew him. He was transfigured, and most ill at ease as he strove lightly to bear both the suit and the chaff that the suit evoked. But in fact he could not bear either, and the suit disappeared. Now for a long time the joke had been: What had he done with the suit? Had he sent it to Newmarket to be raffled in a charitable bazaar? Had he buried it? Was he hiding it upstairs because he thought it was too good for Whitebridge? Even Mr Burgoyne joined in the quiet fun.

"You certainly were very fine, Stone"; or "On my word, Stone, I hadn't seen such a suit since I was at Oxford. There were some tremendous bloods at the House in my time."

The other time-honoured joke was that Miss Granger wanted to marry Dr Wren, and that she would do it sooner or later if he wasn't careful. When Wren came to dinner he expected to be teased towards the end of the meal. When Mary and Sarah, the elderly parlourmaids, had put the dessert on the table and left the room, Dr Wren used to move his hands restlessly and to flush in pleasurable anticipation of his teasing. He liked it and expected it as a part of his treat. Mr Burgoyne entered into this joke also, but it seemed with scruples. It seemed that, although there was no ill-natured

feeling against Miss Granger, his natural chivalry revolted from an illicit use of a lady's name. He liked the suit-joke better. It had, too, this great advantage—that one might have it when one chose: Mary and Sarah could and did take their share in its enjoyment: you need not wait until the door had closed behind them.

Dr Wren was their only frequent visitor—their only visitor at all during large portions of time. Since Effie had attained to years of discretion, she had altogether ceased to provide them with the society of her old friends, or to break the narrow home circle with new intruding faces. For herself—who might be supposed still to need social relaxations—there were occasional subscription dances under the chaperonage of Mrs Townley, the vicar's wife, magic lantern or conjurer at the Anchor Inn, and rare dramatic performances in the Assembly rooms: a triple bill offered by Miss Granger and other Whitebridge amateurs; or what was better, a rousing melodrama unfolded by a Z company who brought their own scenery and limelight.

One ancient well-established custom of friendly intercourse had gradually fallen into abeyance. This was the one-night visits of Mr and Mrs Burgoyne to Lord Frodsham, F.R.S., at Bevis Castle, and his lordship's return one-night visits to them at Cliff Lodge. Now, suddenly, the custom was to be revived by the coming of this scientific nobleman and his two granddaughters. My lord had unexpectedly proposed this courtesy, and already there was disturbance in the air of the preparing household.

But for his versatility, perhaps Lord Frodsham would have been really great. His was a mind that eagerly sought and plunged into every avenue of scientific investigation, and such was his energy and natural strength that at forty he had done good work in all directions. But he was always a scientist: never a philosopher. He was an astronomer, a geologist, a chemist, a botanist, up to a certain point a sound physiologist. With his big telescope at Bevis, his collections of flint implements, his buried temples, his hybrid cattle, his orchid houses, and his yacht, he was a figure known to a vast public

Indeed, the ordinary newspaper-reader, if challenged to give you a list of contemporary men of science, would probably write Lord Frodsham automatically and at once. To the Royal Society he was the author of *Inter-stellar media*, and *Lake Villages of Southern Europe*. These were the only two of all his books which the Royal Society desired to remember. On the publication of the first of these he had been elected: after the appearance of the second he should have laid aside his pen for ever.

Most unhappily, from the point of view of his best friends, my lord at forty had begun to go to pieces. He had thrown in his lot with the vitalists. At forty-five he saw evidences of purposive scheme in all natural phenomena: at fifty he said he was proud to think that he had definitely taken his place "on the side of the angels." When true men of science hear a brother speak of the angels' side, they know what it means: they are very, very sorry.

All this was bad, but worse was to follow. In the last ten or dozen years my lord had twice really disgraced himself. First, with an astounding volte-face—my lord suddenly changing sides—it was spontaneous generation in his own private laboratory at Bevis "irrefutably established." Then, in the recoil from his disappointment—coming back to the old love—it was table-turning in London. Involved in a most vicious circle of ghostmongers, my lord walked hand-in-hand with spirits, talked to them, saw them, felt them: was convinced "on evidence which no sane man could reject." It was the cold breath of these disembodied visitants that for a time had chilled the air between the two life-long friends, Burgoyne and Frodsham. Burgoyne loved his friend, but he could not talk or write sympathetically about his friend's spooks.

"I am so glad," said Mr Burgoyne to Mr Stone, "I am so very glad that Tom Frodsham is coming," and he glanced round the workroom uneasily.

This morning Mrs Burgoyne had deserted them. Every minute she had been called away. Now she was putting out certain little-used portions of the silver plate. Effie, too, was

busy. In large chamois leather gloves and a blue apron, she had gone to the greenhouse to have a serious talk with the gardener. The gardener must pull himself together: this was serious; the need was not now stupid old wall-flowers for Mr Stone and Uncle to play with, but adequately beautiful material for table ornament.

"Vibrations, vibrations," said Mr Burgoyne in a low tone, as though talking to himself.

Most unusual sounds were reaching the workroom this morning. As far-off doors opened and shut, there came a murmur of voices, a metallic clatter, the clink of crockery. Overhead, upstairs, there was strange domestic thunder: beds and sofas grumbling as they rolled. The maids were making ready the visitors' rooms.

"Vibrations," said Mr Burgoyne, laying down his pencil. "I saw Tom Frodsham blooded—out cubbing with the Belvoir—when we were both boys."

"Did you, sir?"

"Tom and I went up to Christ Church together. But I think Tom's older than I am, Stone—by a year or more. His age would be in the *Peerage*, but that's a book I haven't got, so we can't refer to it. Yes, I really am very glad to see him here again."

Then there was a pause, during three heavy claps of domestic thunder—ottoman lids, upstairs.

"One thing I do hope, Stone—that we shall get through it without any stupid argument. You must help me in that, Stone. If you see that coming, you must break in—start something new—change the conversation somehow."

Then there was a long pause, during which Mr Burgoyne whispered more than once that word: "Vibrations."

"Stone. It is no good. I think it is useless to try. I think I cannot work."

"No more can I, sir."

There was no doubt of it. The calm atmosphere was broken by strange vibrations. It was impossible to deny that already the impending visit had made the house insufferably uncomfortable.

"I think," said Mr Burgoyne, "I will go out. I think I will stroll down and get my hair cut."

"I'll come with you," said Stone, "to the door; but I won't go in. I couldn't stand Ingle to-day. I'll hang about, and go on with you when you 'come out—if you care to go on the pier."

Then, forlornly and disconsolately, the two interrupted workers slunk away from the disturbed area.

The manner of Mr Ingle, as he ushered his customer into the saloon, was nervous and flurried. It really seemed that the atmosphere down here by the port was no less disturbed than on the cliff.

"Go to your dinner," said Mr Ingle, curtly dismissing the assistant. "*I attend to Mr Burgoyne.* . . . Sit down, sir, I won't keep you one moment," and he went out into his private hall and stood listening, while the assistant disappeared down the kitchen stairs.

"My wife, sir," said Ingle, returning. "I thought I heard her calling me," and with hasty, agitated hands, he enveloped Mr Burgoyne in the white wrapper.

Mr Ingle was nearly fifty and Mrs Ingle was not yet thirty—a good-looking, high-coloured young woman, who occasionally sat behind the counter in the front shop.

"I hope," said Mr Burgoyne, "that you have not had words again."

"Yes; we have. I've given her a piece of my mind," and jerkily Mr Ingle ran the comb through his customer's hair, and sharply snapped his scissors. "Wants—I'll trouble you—to go dancing off—to what, if you please? The circus procession! Mad for pleasure—but I mean to put a stop to it. *Hark!*" and he hurried to the door of the passage and opened it wide.

Mrs Ingle, with a very high colour, dressed for the promenade, in picture hat and feather boa, came down the stairs, passed through the passage and out of the street door.

"See that, sir?" said Ingle, pale from indignation. "See that? Well, I told her not to go. I *forbid* it, I did. Now

you see for yourself," and he snipped at Mr Burgoyne's hair in so agitated a fashion that Mr Burgoyne told him firmly that he must calm himself or desist altogether.

"Well, I appeal to you, sir. I don't know what's the matter with the woman. I ask you: what possesses her?"

"*Youth*," said Mr Burgoyne. "*Youth*, my friend. She'll grow out of it."

"Well, I tell you I don't know *what* to think about it."

"Don't think about it. Dismiss it from your thoughts—at least, until you have cut my hair. Don't think of it then. It is not worth thinking about. It is nothing at all."

Then, with an effort, the hairdresser calmed himself sufficiently to get to work in a becoming professional style, and soon the scissors snapped smoothly and rhythmically.

On the threshold of the front shop, Mr Burgoyne, with hair and beard neatly trimmed, paused, and turning, spoke very gravely.

"Ingle. We ought to be good to our young wives. We ought to be very kind and gentle with our young wives. Never forget that."

Lord Frodsham and the two Miss Broomhalls arrived in time for afternoon tea, and from tea to dinner it became Effie's pleasant duty to entertain these young ladies. They seemed amiable girls, very much alike externally: brown-haired, white skinned; with large thoughtful eyes and pretty caressing manners. One was eighteen years of age; the other, twenty. The younger one was Edith, and the elder was Jacqueline—but to be called "Jack for short" by all friends, including Effie. At first Effie liked them both equally; then she liked Edith better than Jack; then she came to doubt whether she really liked Jack at all.

"Show us the house," said Miss Jacqueline in a whisper. "Effie, do show us the house."

This was after tea, when the little party was still in the drawing-room. Lord Frodsham was a tall, lean old man. Above his high forehead he was shinily bald, and the hair over

his ears and in his eyebrows was like coarse white thread ; but his beard was still sandy in colour. The thick eyebrows, and the straight line into which the underside of his moustache was sternly clipped, gave him a somewhat aggressive aspect, but in eyes and voice and gesture he was bland and suave. His hearty laugh—a sudden, unchecked explosion—was winning in its genial gaiety. He laughed now as he stood warming his lean back at the fire.

"Where are your manners, Jack ? Don't you know it's wrong to whisper in company ? I'll never take you out visiting again " ; and then he begged Mrs Burgoyne to send the young people out of the room. Rational conversation was impossible when his girls were present.

Outside in the hall the Misses Broomhall chattered freely.

"Isn't grandfather old-fashioned? . . . Oh, he is ! You'll see at dinner he'll have a velvet collar to his coat. And no one else has done that for centuries. But he's awfully clever, you know."

Then Miss Jack, looking back almost regretfully at the closed door of the drawing-room, asked why Mr Stone had not come with them.

"But, of course, he's seen the house before. He lives here, doesn't he? . . . I like Mr Stone's face. I suppose he is awfully clever, too."

They were nice girls, but they had been building foolish hopes upon this visit about which grandpapa had talked so much : they had woven silly-girl dreams of amusement, excitement, even adventures. Grandpa had declared that there certainly would not be a dance—but you never can tell. Now, as Effie showed them the house, although they sincerely admired everything because it was all so different from Bevis Castle, their thoughtful eyes grew more thoughtful. The visit was opening tamely.

"Grandfather has things just like that—but not nearly so many of them."

Having exhausted all else, they had come at last to the end of the corridor on the first floor. Here, between Mrs Bur-

goyne's bedroom and the big bathroom, were hung in neatly glazed frames diplomas of honorary degrees from foreign universities, addresses—plain and illuminated—from learned societies, institutions, hospitals, etc., etc.: and other documentary evidences of the world-wide veneration in which the great man was held. Such evidences had in the past been carefully buried by the great man at the bottom of deeply secret drawers, but Mrs Burgoyne, urgently pleading for permission to bring them forth, had finally been allotted this obscure recess in which to exhibit them, when, with pious art, Mr Hind had put them into their frames.

"Grandfather," said Miss Edith, "would like them to make Mr Burgoyne a peer. He says Mr Burgoyne is ten times cleverer than he is. Why don't they make him something as he is so awfully clever?"

Effie told them that her uncle did not desire any new honours. She was not quite sure, but she thought her uncle had been offered a baronetcy on two occasions, and each time he had refused it.

"Oh, I don't think much of a baronetcy," said Jack. "But perhaps he would like to be a peer. Grandfather would ask them—like a shot—next time we are up in London. He is going to have us invited to a court ball!"

But Effie begged that no such step might be taken without first consulting Uncle Richard himself. She could not answer for him, but she was almost sure that he would not like a peerage. The fact was that he was always so busy that he could not attend to it properly.

"No," said Jack. "I believe grandfather neglects his—disgracefully."

After the diplomas there was really nothing more for them to see—except the two queer little staircases leading to the upper floor that contained Mr Stone's room, the box-room, and all the servants' rooms.

"Grandfather wouldn't let us bring a maid," Edith explained. "He said if we couldn't dress ourselves at our age we ought to be ashamed," and she laughed gaily. "But he

has brought Jeffries to dress *him*. I told him he was a lazy old man, and that made him laugh. Doesn't he make a noise when he laughs? But he *is* such a dear. You don't know what a dear he is to us."

Then the visitors suggested that Effie should go and look at their evening frocks.

"I do hope you like them," said Jack. "By-the-by—are any people coming to dinner?"

Only Dr Wren was coming; and Dr Wren was not very young. Oh no! Dr Wren was much over twenty-five.

They were really nice girls—making no fuss, but henceforth they were girls without hope. There would be no excitement; the visit would go on as tamely as it had begun. But, with the abandonment of vague dreams, they settled down mentally; throwing themselves whole-heartedly into such quiet joy as this companionship with a new girl friend could afford them.

They chattered without pause or hesitation, pouring into Effie confidence, history, fable: childish reminiscences of past delight; childish plans for future pleasures.

Effie must come and stay with them for a week or a month at Bevis Castle—or, better still, at the house in Upper Grosvenor Street. This Effie really must do, and go with them to London balls. Their mother was dead, and their father had married again, and between papa and grandpapa there was coldness, but no strife. They spent more than half the year with grandpapa, and the rest of it at home in Warwickshire with papa, or under the care and chaperonage of Mrs Sergeantson—an old bore. Mrs Sergeantson was always with them in Upper Grosvenor Street, but grandfather would not have her at Bevis. He alone looked after them at Bevis. In London he pretended that he hated the trouble of taking them to parties, but really and truly he enjoyed the parties as much as, if not more than, they enjoyed them.

"Effie," said Edith. "You *are* fond of dancing, aren't you?"

"Effie," said Jack. "What sort of men do you like best?

Do you like them *with* moustaches or without? You know, now, in the cavalry—in some of the very smartest regiments—they are clean-shaved: just like your Mr Stone. Why didn't Mr Stone go into the cavalry? I think Mr Stone would look rather nice in uniform—in a breastplate."

Then it was, as Jack chattered about clean-shaved men, that Effie thought she liked Edith so much better than Jack.

It was a pleasant, homelike dinner-party of eight in the simple old-world dining-room. The candle-light shone softly on the best cut glass, the best china, and an unusual display of silver plate, on Effie's table furniture of late roses and chrysanthemums, on glossy fringes, and on white foreheads, on my lord's bald head and velvet collar; but it lost itself in the dark old panelling and the black engravings. From the hall came indistinct sounds of a male assistant's heavy boots, of dishes scrooping on the seats of the oak chairs, while within the room the two parlour-maids, Mary and Sarah, with Ruth, the upper housemaid, to help them, bustled about thoroughly enjoying themselves, glad to show the world that maids can wait as well as any pack of arrogant men. In the mirror above the Sheraton bureau, and again in the glass behind the salvers and decanters on the Sheraton sideboard, you could see all the little party: the four wise men; and the watchful hostess; and the three brown-haired, white-skinned girls, sitting silent and demure for a moment, but with eyes ready to dance and sparkle at the hint of anything like a joke. Four girls—not three—they seemed in the glass. In the glass, at least, Mrs Burgoyne looked as young as the other three.

Dr Wren and Mr Stone provided good small talk, but too plainly they hung upon the words of the learned elders, hoping to pick up all crumbs from a great intellectual feast. But as yet one could only admire without garnering. For the elders, forgetting all learned lore, calling each other Dick and Tom, had escorted each other back into that far-off past when they were boys together, and spoke only of Oxford and undergraduate days: of a bonfire for the dean, of Mercury as an

impromptu bath for bull-dogs, of foxhunts and drags, of that never-to-be-forgotten steeplechase in the vale of Aylesbury.

"I ought to have won, Dick," cried Lord Frodsham, F.R.S. ; "and I should have, if that young ass Wilmington hadn't cannoned me. You'd never have won, Dick, if I hadn't been on my back in the lane," and his lordship laughed explosively.

"Nonsense," said the author of *Structural Principles*, "I hadn't begun to gallop. I was waiting for you. But as you wouldn't come on, I just jogged ahead and won as I pleased."

"Listen to him. Mrs Burgoyne, your husband always was the most conceited man I ever knew. But I'll drink his health for the sake of auld lang syne," and my lord glanced at his empty glass.

Signals of suppressed merriment had been exchanged by Effie, Mr Stone and the hostess. When champagne was to be served, Mary always declined masculine aid. She was wine-butler at the Lodge, and she brooked no interference. Now—as always happened—she and the other two maids had been gathered round a champagne bottle, as three good dogs may be seen about a hedgehog that they have unexpectedly found—half angry with it, half afraid of it, but wholly unable to open it. Then at last Mary in despair passed out the bottle to unseen hands in the hall, and soon a loud report announced a male victory. Then the loud reports followed each other rapidly, as though it was felt in the hall that to-night at Cliff Lodge no guest—be he lord or gardener—should go short of fizzy wine.

Not till the ladies left them did the good talk come from the learned elders. Then, as the host cracked nuts and the guest sipped his port, they chatted of the great workers. Wren and Stone drawing up their chairs listened intently; or, like two schoolboys at the masters' table, asked deferential questions.

They were all good, it seemed—the real workers. And so many of them Lord Frodsham had known in the flesh. It was splendid to hear the great names spoken by these two old men in tones of love and pride, and yet with the freedom of a noble comradeship.

Johannes Müller, Gegenbaur, Schwann, Kölliker, Virchow, Wernicke—they were running through the Germans : “those patient, steadfast dogs,” as Burgoyne called them.

“And Flechsig?” asked Stone.

Oh, a good man, a true man, a sound man, the two elders both agreed.

“And Haeckel?” asked Dr Wren.

“Oh, I know Ernst Haeckel,” said Lord Frodsham rather grimly. “Haeckel entertained me very handsomely when I was in Jena ten years ago. I don’t want to say a word against Ernst Haeckel.”

Then as my lord sat silent, Mr Burgoyne, cracking his nuts, spoke of Professor Haeckel with considerable admiration.

“But he frightens me—I have told him so—by what I call his temperamental audacity.”

“Audacity, yes,” said Lord Frodsham.

“That is the impression he has given me in all his later books,” said Mr Burgoyne, smiling benignly as he reached for the salt—“a temperamental audacity that wars with profound thought. It really has seemed to me sometimes that in his striving after synthetic effect—the desire to make each department of knowledge neat and natty—dear old Haeckel will dab in anything: fact, fancy—anything that comes handiest at the moment.”

Then, without warning, before Stone could do anything to avert it, the stupid argument burst upon them. To Lord Frodsham, the vitalist and sometime spiritualist, the name of Haeckel was as poison in the blood; and now in a moment, as Wren afterwards said, he let loose the whole bag of tricks: design in all nature, vital force, the mystery behind the veil, everything. It was useless for Mr Burgoyne to smile deprecatingly: if he declined to argue, he was at least forced to answer.

“Don’t shirk it, Dick. Don’t try to shuffle out of it. You are a very big man, but you are stopped there as completely as the smallest of us. You can write about it, but you can no more explain it than a child of two.”

"Well, well," said Mr Burgoyne, gently advancing the port decanter.

"No thank you. Did you read what Jenner Cox said the other day?"

"Surely, Tom, you wouldn't trot out Jenner Cox to support you?"

"I don't know why not. But I'll give you someone else, Oliver Lodge. What did Lodge say? What does Cranford say? We are stopped by the mystery of life as by a wall in which there is not and never can be a door. What did you confess to me yourself years ago? You told me yourself that you were forced to admit——"

"Never. Never, my dear Tom. You must be thinking of some other fellow."

"Dick. On my terrace at Bevis you as good as confessed to me——"

Then for a few moments there was perceptible heat on both sides.

"No, Tom. Never."

Then with a wonderful smile Mr Burgoyne said gently: "But, Tom, we are forgetting—the ladies."

Wonderful it was to observe the effect of this appeal upon the excited guest. At once the argument was done with; the wrinkles on my lord's bald forehead disappeared; the aggressive line of the moustache relaxed or was broken by the smile upon the lips beneath it: all heat was gone.

"To be sure," and Lord Frodsham laughed jovially. "I didn't come here to wrangle over my wine, did I, Tom? Now, you youngsters lead the way"; and, taking big Dr Wren by the shoulders, he pushed him towards the opened door.

In spite of modest reluctance, Dr Wren and Mr Stone were compelled to precede the older guest. My lord, ashamed of himself when he thought of the stupid little argument, hung back until he could link his arm in that of his life-long friend. Then arm-in-arm, calling each other Dick and Tom, the two old boys followed the young boys into the drawing-room.

"Do you know," said Jack, when Effie was bidding her new friends a last good-night before Jack's bedroom fire—"do you know, Effie, Mr Stone has what I call a *haunting* face. He looks so good—but is he really? . . . I believe if one sat out a dance with Mr Stone he'd want to kiss one."

Then it was that Effie, flushing faintly as she said good-night, thought that she liked Edith very much, but did not like Jack at all.

VI

THE end of an epoch was drawing near. *The Framework of Life* was approaching completion. Mr Burgoyne, working double tides with Stone to help him, had polished off this comparatively light task in surprisingly quick time. It was his custom to make a forecast or estimate of the time that would probably be spent in the writing of each new book. Now, week after week, month after month, he had been ahead of his time-table. Already, "almost before one could look round"—as he said himself—the room was full of printers' proofs. In the past, the proofs were always the hardest labour, but in this stage Stone was now extraordinarily useful.

There had been no more dinner-parties since the visit of Lord Frodsham. There had been no invited guests—except Dr Wren. But uninvited guests were many. Newspaper correspondents, thinking that Mr Burgoyne had been "too long silent," made frequent calls of polite inquiry and begged in vain of Mary or Sarah—those staunch guardians of the door—to get the master to jot down on a sheet of notepaper the heads of any matters he might be pondering. Whitebridge, generally, paid calls of ceremony, and filled with recurrent pasteboard the Lowestoft bowl on the table beneath the Venetian looking-glass in the hall. Whitebridge in trouble came and was admitted. Neighbours, gentle and simple, when for a moment they felt themselves enshrouded in a fog of doubt and difficulty, claimed their inalienable right as neighbours to consult the famous Oracle on the Cliff; and Mary or Sarah, allowing the claim, swung back the guarded door and let them in.

Thus, in mid-February—of a wild forenoon when rain beat upon the window panes, and St Valentine, sobbing and howling, showed a sad wet face to mating birds—Mary had to

announce two simultaneous arrivals: neighbours who, claiming the right, insisted on sending in their names to Mr Burgoyne in his leather arm-chair.

"Yes, quite so, Mary."

Miss Granger had been ushered to the drawing-room. Mr Townley, the vicar, had been put into the adjoining apartment: the pretty little morning-room, or, as Mary and the rest of the household called it—Miss Effie's room. In the hall Mr Burgoyne paused for a moment's consideration. Yes, he would take the vicar first—as the more difficult, probably too the more fatiguing.

The vicar—a vague, grey man with a true pulpit voice and baulked, unfinished gestures—was in grievous trouble. He said it ere Effie, who had lingered but from politeness, could glide from the room. Oh, most grievous.

"I am sorry to hear that, Mr Townley. Pray tell me all about it."

Well then, Mr Townley was *disheartened*—utterly disheartened. There was no other word for it. In spite of his superhuman efforts—superhuman in the sense that unusual strength had hitherto been vouchsafed to him—he now felt that the good work was disintegrating, tumbling about him in a most distressing manner. The best of shepherds need material support—from good dogs and honest lads, etc.—otherwise they must become disheartened. And now this shepherd felt so thoroughly disheartened that he was at times disposed to lay by his crook and let his flock, like the Gadarene swine, go violently down the steep place that yawned in front of them.

"But, Mr Townley, what is the pressing trouble at the moment?"

Money, said Mr Townley, was most urgently needed for the Church Curate Fund and also for the Cottage Hospital. This double drain was dividing the poorly-fed stream of charity. Hundreds of pounds were wanted for the hospital. Really they wanted so much for the hospital that nothing was left for the church. Mr Townley did not desire to belittle the good work done by the hospital. Most important were bodily

needs, but there were higher and more important needs. To carry the good word about this ever-expanding parish taxed the utmost powers of two lusty curates—and never were stout, unflinching curates more expensive than just now. The service of the Harbour Mission Room was yearly more arduous.

"It is," said the vicar, "impossible to exaggerate the extent of our difficulties or the feebleness of our support."

And then he plainly hinted that perhaps the most disheartening factor in the sum of their troubles was that no support of any kind came from the richest, the most important, the best known parishioner of all.

"Roughly, eighty or ninety pounds are bitterly needed, betwixt now and Easter, to put us on our legs and enable us to face the summer. Oh," said Mr Townley, "how gladly should I face that glad season if this crushing load were lifted and we started again fairly and squarely! Now will you, Mr Burgoyne—as our principal resident—head a new list for the Curate Fund—a special appeal? Your name alone would be invaluable. It would remove so many unfortunate impressions—erroneous, perhaps, but distressing impressions. Your avowed support would indeed smooth the path. Now will you head our list?"

"No," said Mr Burgoyne gravely. "I can't do that. I could not do that. Honestly, I should have conscientious scruples."

Mr Townley raised an arm with a jerk as though he had received a blow.

He had never read a single page in all Mr Burgoyne's many books, and yet he had no shadow of doubt that the books should properly have been burnt by the public hangman. He had read of the books in the newspapers. That was sufficient. He was a staunch Anglican, but he would have wished to shake the Pope cordially by the hand when he read that every one of the books had been placed on the Index. Now, when their author spoke of conscientious scruples, he felt that it was more than disheartening: it was offensive.

"No," said Mr Burgoyne thoughtfully. "I couldn't do

that. But I can perhaps relieve the pressure. If I silence the cry of the Cottage Hospital, you will have an open field—for the curates. How much did you say they want—the hospital people?"

"Three hundred and seventy odd pounds."

Then Mr Burgoyne left the room; and, returning, gave the vicar a cheque for three hundred and eighty pounds.

"I have made it payable to self or bearer. Perhaps you will pass it through your account, and then give them your own cheque. I don't want my name to appear. A little secret between ourselves. An anonymous subscription."

"Oh, let me give the initials at least. Oh, why not the name?"

"No, no. Quite anonymous. If you must put anything, put down *a friend*. A friend! That's what I hope you'll always think me, Mr Townley—even if we don't see eye to eye on all subjects."

"But," said Mr Burgoyne in the hall, "will you not have a glass of port and a biscuit after your walk?"

"Nay, nay," cried the beaming vicar. "Your munificent gift has already put heart and fire into me. I need no wine."

Then Mr Burgoyne tackled the other case—Miss Evelyn Granger waiting in the drawing-room.

Miss Granger—long since acknowledged belle of Whitebridge—lived on the other hill, near the coastguard station, with her old mother. She was a fine, big, dark-haired, handsome girl of thirty, of thirty-two, thirty-three—who could say for certain? She could act, she could sing, she could dance; she was a jolly, good-natured girl; and the marvel was that she was still Miss Granger. Many admirers had been hers—fond admirers they seemed too—but somehow, as Whitebridge said, she had never been able to bring one of them to book. Mrs Garret—and others—said her mother was to blame. Perhaps the mother had stood in her way. It was she who frightened the men. Too complaisant, too arch, and, above all, too fat? She committed solecisms by opening the door for Sunday callers—filling the little passage with her

bulk, nodding and smiling: "Come in. Oh, come in. Evie's not far off"—making a man think, against his will, "and *this* is Evie in twenty years' time."

Be all that as it may, poor Evie had come through the wind and the rain to consult the Oracle; and now, as she brought forth a large envelope from beneath her wet cloak, she spoke with a catching of the breath.

"P'r'aps—Mr Burgoyne—you don't know that it's Valentine's Day."

"I own I had not thought of it."

Then, as Miss Granger unfolded her horrid Valentine, she burst into tears.

"Oh, Mr Burgoyne! Loo—loo—look what they've sent me."

Truly it was a horrid thing—such a dangling, gross-hued sheet as one may still see hanging in mean shops in poor neighbourhoods during the second week of February: the coarse presentment of a vermillion-cheeked young lady with wasp waist and dragon's eyes, who pursues a concourse of flying men—soldiers, sailors, policemen, and black-coated riff-raff.

"But, my dear child, surely you do not attach any weight to this ugly nonsense? Let me put it into the fire. That's where it ought to have been hours ago."

"It is so cruel," cried Evie. "I never say an ill-natured thing of anyone. I like people. Why should they say such horrid things of me—and all hate me?"

"No, no," said Mr Burgoyne, disdainfully folding the ugly picture. "Don't think that. How *can* you think it? Don't give one thought to this. It is not worth thinking about. It is nothing at all. There. There."

But Evie, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief, still sobbed, and would not be consoled.

"Mr Burgoyne! Do—do you think Dr Wren had a hand in sending it?"

"I am *sure* that he had not," said Mr Burgoyne decisively.

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes—by the circumstantial evidence of seven years. George Wren is a very fine fellow. He could no more countenance so vulgar, so foolish a pleasantry than I could. Now, that's like saying that I am a fine fellow myself, isn't it?" and Mr Burgoyne laughed.

Then Miss Granger laughed also, and pocketed her handkerchief.

"There," said Mr Burgoyne, pointing to the cheerful fire. "Let us put it in its proper place and think no more about it. . . . That's right"; and as the smoky flames from the daubed paper rose and fell, the great thinker gave poor Evie a touch of homely fireside philosophy.

There was, he told her in conclusion, probably no malice or ill-feeling behind the phenomenon—only folly. "One must not show when one is hurt in stupid fun. Read *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and see what her friends did to Olivia—behind her back—in that rude game," and the philosopher chuckled and rubbed his hands. "Oh yes, very vulgar. But they meant no harm."

"And now," added Mr Burgoyne, "will you not have a glass of sherry and a piece of cake after your long walk?"

"No, thank you, Mr Burgoyne—but I shall be able to eat my lunch, and I couldn't have—if you hadn't told me what you have told me."

On the next occasion, after this morning call, that Dr Wren dined at Cliff Lodge, and—the dessert having been set upon the table—the Granger joke was duly introduced, Mr Burgoyne gently, but firmly, forbade its further use.

"No. Really I think that joke is played out—grown threadbare. Really, it is not fair to Wren—and not fair to the lady."

At last the *Framework* was done. The final revise had gone back to London: Mr Stone's index had been passed for press. For the moment Mr Burgoyne was an idle man.

Now, between books—when one work had been polished off and before another work had been begun—was traditionally the time for any long-delayed festivity, such as the Bevis Castle

visits, a trip to London for the purpose of buying Mrs Burgoyne some new dresses, or a jeweller's trinket : a surprise beyond the scope of Mr Hind. Now or never—in the holiday pause—must all arrears of innocent dissipation be cleared up. The hour had come : Mr Burgoyne stood between books. Now or never—in the brief respite—must the big room be *tidied*.

Effie was panting to begin. Twice only, since she came to the Lodge six years ago, had tidying been possible. Now again the happy hour has struck. Effie ties the band of her blue apron in a jerking bow, and as she pulls on her chamois leather gloves, there is resolution in her big bright eyes and her small closed mouth. This is to be the grandest tidying-up ever known. Uncodified and waste material will receive no mercy ; all must join in the dusty task ; all volunteers or extra hands are welcome.

"Dr Wren. You keep to the pamphlets. Put them on the floor, there—and understand that is *your* corner. Don't come out of it."

In deciding what shall be done with the rubbish—what to destroy, what to preserve—Mr Burgoyne sits as judge in his big arm-chair, with his noble waste-paper basket beside him. And the difficulty, of course, is to prevent Mr Burgoyne from reading the rubbish. A glance should suffice ; he must not thoughtfully peruse.

"Uncle !" and Effie stands before him. "Uncle ! You are reading again."

"Reading ?" he echoes, without looking up.

"Yes. Uncle Richard, do you hear ? You must not read." Then he looks up.

"If you read, you know we never can finish."

"I believe you are right, my dear."

Effie alone has the power of thus keeping him up to the mark.

Then for a time he tears and casts away in a hot fit of destruction, taking a child's delight in the piles of torn paper.

"Yes—Order out of chaos. That's what we'll make, dear—Order out of chaos," and he tears and tears and tears.

More noble even than his waste-paper basket is the immense

waste-paper trough—like an old-fashioned wooden manger—that is a fixture beneath one set of bookshelves. Here must go all the printed stuff with which he is unceasingly bombarded—pamphlets and still more pamphlets: *The case for a Public Inquiry into the High-handed Recent closing of Footpaths on Cherrytree Hill*, by a Resident; *The Incidence of Taxation in Crown Colonies*, by the late governor of the Saint Leopold Islands. *If Dogs could Talk*, Anon; etc., etc., etc. It is for kind Dr Wren to bundle such fodder into the manger. There can be no grain in such chaff as this. But Dr Wren must be careful to winnow, when he comes to parcels tied with string and bearing the hieroglyphic signs that mean, in words; “To be looked at again.” Stone has his arms full of these parcels—in which may be found those rare pages or columns of figures, sketch-maps or diagrams, that have been marked or annotated by the master’s pencil. Pages thus honoured must be cut from stitched covers, clipped, and docketed with neat slips that bear initial-letters and reference-numbers, and must be given a place at last in one of the great fact-holding portfolios. But, in effecting this splendid interment, there must be communion with the master-mind.

“Now,” says kind Dr Wren late in the afternoon, when the trough is being emptied once more, and the dust throughout the room is rising to meet the falling twilight—“Now. Let’s do it altogether. Miss Effie. You say *Wisher*. Stone, say *Whosher*; and I’ll say *Rasher*. Now then—altogether.”

This is a new joke. In fact, all the world has been sneezing because of the dust, and now foolish Dr Wren will make them combine to give what he calls “the giant’s sneeze.”

The result is so eminently successful, so ludicrously gigantic, that Mr Burgoyne himself begs for an encore.

Then Dr Wren shows that he is indeed always thoughtful, as well as sometimes foolish, by producing from his pockets three little stoppered bottles of patent smelling salts; and after brief inhalations all the world is cured of its dust-trouble.

Then Mary, appearing at the door, asks if she may make the tea. It is time to knock off; dusty toilers must go and wash

their dirty paws ; and then, in the dust-free drawing-room, will come the happy, laughing, lingering meal of these most rare and happy holidays. But, ere they go, the author of *Rhythmic Curves* pleads for one more encore of the giant's sneeze. He has found this foolish joke to be quite irresistible. So good George Wren—swelling with pride in his success—gives the great man an additional, complimentary *Shoo* for him to fire with the *Whoshers* etc., of the combined volley.

With the added *Shoo*, the giant surpasses himself.

Thus in the short winter days Effie's third grand tidying is accomplished. All are grateful to Effie—as they stand between books—for her indomitable resolution. All this clearing-up is, as it were, preparing the dockyard. The ship has been launched. They are about to lay the keel-plates of the new ship. Three years' labour in construction ! It is worth one's while to make all neat before the work begins.

On the second evening Stone and Wren, alone in the shadowy room, talk of it with lowered voices. Stone has been told the name : the title has been long since chosen. It is to be called *The Mechanism of Thought*.

"I think," says Stone, "that it is going to be the biggest thing he has ever done."

As they speak of it, they leave the fire-lit hearth, and, as though instinctively, cross the room and stand before the long shelf that bears the "file copies" of the printed books. It is as though the books had drawn them from the cheerful fire-glow, the life of the leaping flames, to the grey shadows that mask and guard the impalpable world of thought.

Reverently the two men stood looking at the wonderful shelf while they spoke of the projected addition to the long line of close-packed books.

"I have been thinking," said Stone, "of something I heard of at Leipzig. Things they prepared when Paul Flechsig was working there. I wonder if I could get them over. But I'll tell you about that another time. He says he will need much help—Wren, I wish we could think of how we could help him in the book itself—*somewhat*."

"I only wish we could," said Dr Wren. "But how *can* we? He needs no help of that sort. It is only his way of speaking. Who helped him here—unless it was the dead men?" And Dr Wren pointed to the books.

Here, from left to right, from the wall towards the window, ran the endless row : the *Collected Essays* : the *Magic Mirror* —the book which he would have withdrawn had it been possible—the book which nothing could kill, which, in fifty languages, abridged, pirated, editorially expanded, or in bald synopsis, made its ever-widening circles of popular fame ; those four companions : *Rhythmic Curves*, *Structural Principles*, *Growth and Decay*, and the *Universal Republic*; Ethics, Logic, Social Economy—an awe-inspiring row of dark brown volumes.

Truly, it moved one with reverential awe if one realised how the books of the great series fell into their places as though, mentally, their creator had felt the gaps and must needs fill them. Unlike Spencer with his cut and dried plan, yet it was most curious how like Spencer in filling the long shelf with the connected, if unnumbered, series—proving Spencer's law of progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity ; showing that great books cannot stand alone, self-contained, homogeneous, but must have inter-dependence with other great books, can be only complex specialised parts of an infinitely complex yet harmonious whole ; demonstrating the deeper law that a great philosopher can have only one life-work—the survey of all knowledge : that he must pass on from province to province, as Spencer passed, even though he does not know, as Spencer knew, the sequence of his future progress.

Thoughtfully Dr Wren drew out the first volume of the *Mental Physiology*, and thoughtfully glanced at the title-page. Thirty years ago! Now, this new book would drop into its place : it might be considered as the long-delayed third and fourth volume of the *Physiology* : it would fill the narrow space that had been left for Time's enlargement. But it would do more than this. *The Mechanism of Thought!* It would form

the logical sequel, the companion volume to the last book : *The Framework of Life*. When one came to think of it—when one had been told the title—what other book could he write now but the book he had decided upon writing ? None other. So it seemed to Mr Stone and Dr Wren, standing in the twilight before the long shelf, and thinking that, mentally, they too had felt the gap and divined the matter that must fill it.

Mr Burgoyne is never allowed to go into the big room after dinner. This rule—made by himself originally—is spoken of by his wife with religious respect ; but now, towards the end of the tidying, he pleads for permission to break it.

“Sybil, there is a good fire. It will not be cold in there. . . . I should not sleep to-night.”

The desire to get to work is growing stronger and stronger. Doubtless the book has slowly built itself in his brain during many years. All day he has been note-making—scribbling fast and furiously, no longer conscious of the tidyers—and now he talks to Stone of his scheme.

“I have been working out my time-table, and I wish you would help me to check it. See. I have given myself three years. Now—first, this is my plan—and, this time, I mean to adhere to it. I really think we may rely on this.”

And then eagerly he unfolds his scheme. What would the newspaper men have given to be present now—hidden behind window curtains or the half-open door of the inner room—flimsy and pencils ready ? A table has been pulled from the wall ; a big lamp has been moved ; and he and Stone sit at the table in a circle of clear light. Mrs Burgoyne, by the fire-side, and Effie, at a small table with her box of dominoes, are both watching the two lamplit faces—the noble grey head, splendid and statuesque, lit up by the inward and the outward glow, and the graceful dark head, the clean-cut intellectual mask, and the dark eyes that seem to flash with a splendid reflected gleam. Effie presently laying out the dominoes finds her adversary, Dr Wren, spell-bound, useless, not worth playing with, were one to rouse him for the encounter. Dr Wren

—of course asked to dinner as a reward for good tidying—is indeed spell-bound as he listens. This thing has come to him: to sit at his ease and listen while the greatest thinker of the age sketches the outlines of an epoch-marking work. Dr Wren will think of it, but he will not speak of it. For three years, at least, his lips are sealed; but later he may talk of it—as an old man, may tell the tale of this quiet fireside evening.

Yet, so far as Mr Burgoyne is concerned, he might tell all the world to-morrow. Not for such as Burgoyne are the fears of being forestalled, of losing the heightened effect that comes from surprise. If there lives a man who can do the book better, let this other do it. He is now, as always, one of the men described in Tyndall's ringing words: "They have but one desire—to know the truth. They have but one fear—to believe a lie."

"Well, see now, Stone," and he spreads out his pencilled sheets—"I break it into parts—but only on my time-table, you understand—I'll have no breaks or ugly divisions. I do want to make it flow steadily on if I can—this time.

"Well then: four parts! Now: nine months for each part! That's full measure. That *must* be enough, mustn't it?"

"It depends," says Stone sagely, "on what you put in the parts."

"Stone," says Mr Burgoyne somewhat ruefully, "there's a lot of work before us in the first two parts. The second two will be easy going," and he hands Stone the synopsis, and points with his pencil.

"See. Part one: two big chapters. One: Phylogenetic. Two: Ontogenetic. You see, that's just clearing the ground. I'll make it as short—as short as ever I can"; and while the young man, resting forehead on hand, stoops in careful consideration, the old man points and reads.

"Then. Part two: the Organ. One: Purposive Action. Two: Reflex Action. Three: the Cortex. Four: Mapping the Thought-areas. There! There, Stone. That means work. I'm so rusty—so wofully rusty—

"Part Three: Analysis. Yes, this will be all analytical up to Chapter Four. Then—then, Stone," and Mr Burgoyne leans back in his chair and softly rubs his hands together; "then I hope to tell them something. I do really hope I have something to say. If I wasn't afraid of the critics—my nerve is not what it was"—and he chuckled—"I'd like to call my Chapter Four *The Chameleon's Colour*—or *The Knight's Shield*. . . . The old line, you know—objective and subjective phenomena! All one, Stone—all one! . . . Five and six: Deductive and Synthetic—summing up. I can't plan those till I have got there, can I? But that's sure to be a slow block, isn't it?"

"Part Four; Speculative," and again he rubs his hands. "Easy going, Stone. Giving all my thoughts! Plain sailing, then. For that is ready, you know."

Then Stone most carefully considers the time-table, while Mr Burgoyne watches him anxiously. Stone can pronounce: from past experience he is able to judge. With astonishing fulness he has grasped the intricacies of Mr Burgoyne's method, has gauged Mr Burgoyne's normal rate of progress. Six more months must be allowed for Parts One and Two. Mr Burgoyne is flabbergasted and argues, but Stone will not abate a day.

"You may be right, Stone. No doubt you are right, Stone."

Parts Three and Four—Stone announces—will go quick—even the summing-up chapters; and Mr Burgoyne chuckles in pleasure. Then the new times are inserted and the corrected time-table is complete.

He loved his time-tables—filling in the record of his work week by week, or even day by day. He loved to note the interest shown by all the home-world in the recorded hours: the anxiety to learn if he was up to time or behind it. He loved the massive glow that warmed his blood when—as in the case of the *Framework*—he was beating the time-table into a cocked hat.

VII

NEARLY a year had passed, and in the big room Mr Stone was taking down his new mural decorations. These were the wonderful brain-maps which he had procured as a compliment to Mr Burgoyne. Now, on this cold December morning, while Mr and Mrs Burgoyne were having their walk, he determined to put the compliment out of sight.

"Let me help you," said Miss Effie as he brought down the first of the big sheets and began to fold it. "I am so glad you have done with them. Oh, Jack, they *are* so hideous."

"Hideous! Well, I suppose they are not pretty, Effie. That's their misfortune, not their fault. We can't all be pretty, you know. But there's something worse about them than being ugly. They have proved quite useless."

"Didn't Uncle Richard like them?"

"Well he hasn't used them yet."

To Mr Stone, keenly desirous of assisting his employer in any conceivable manner, it had seemed that he really hit on a brilliant idea. The vague idea had come at once when he first heard the title, *The Mechanism of Thought*, and it had taken shape as he sat listening to the scheme or outline of the new book.

Obviously, Mr Burgoyne intended to "clear the ground" after this manner. In his first chapter—spoken of by him as phylogenetic—he would trace out the evolution of the cerebro-spinal axis upward from the earliest vertebrates to man. In his second chapter—the one he spoke of as ontogenetic—he would repeat the process for the individual, bringing together all the embryological facts: sketching the laws that make the development of each single life shadow forth the history of the development of all the race. With the ground cleared, he

would pass on to a physical consideration of the encephalon with his analysis of structure and function in its highest and latest development—the marvellous grey bed, the cortex of the cerebrum. In these chapters he would naturally review the work, during the last twenty or thirty years, theoretical and experimental, of the great histologists, the physiologists, and pathologists. All that had been done by such men as Schäfer and Horsley, Sherrington and Grünbaum, Ferrier, Brodie, etc., etc.—a long list—must here be reviewed; all that had been thought by such men as Bastian, Charcot, Broadbent, Kussmaul, Déjerine, Gowers, etc., etc., must here be weighed. Then, after this prelude, would come the task that he had spoken of as “mapping the thought-areas.” This, as Stone understood it, would be the piecing together and setting up of the organ itself and its functional life by what might still be termed purely inductive reasoning: as though saying in effect. “After sifting, weighing, grouping the thoughts of other men and advancing as far as I dare, this is what *I* think is probable. More than probability I cannot, in the nature of things, now offer to you.” All to this point would be preliminary: a consideration in all its aspects of the thought-machine. Then, only would the real book begin, when, as he only of living men could do it, he began to link matter and mind, to lead one on—stage by stage—and arduous headachy stages they would be to lovers of light reading—to his unfolding of the iron laws that have always governed and must always govern human thought.

It was in reference to these preliminary chapters that he had spoken of the hard work and regretted that, in his own modest phrase, he was so wofully rusty; and here exactly, in relation to these early chapters, seemed to be the chance for Stone. At Leipzig, as Stone knew, the hospital staff had with the camera and microscope together achieved splendid results in producing vast sheets—six feet and eight feet square—giving one brain sections as perfect as though one stood with the microscopic lens beneath one’s eye. These noble enlargements had been first attempted under the personal direction of

Paul Flechsig ; and, ever since, the clever staff had been growing more and more clever at the work. In Madrid, too, under Ramon y Cajal, the camera had been busy : of late there had been more and more talk of Madrid.

Surely if Mr Stone could obtain from Leipzig and Madrid reproductions of all their recent work in the exploration of diseased and healthy brains in man and the higher mammals —surely these pictures must be of some use to Mr Burgoyne as he mapped the thought-areas.

"My dear fellow," said Wren, when Stone explained his idea. "Have you thought what it would cost—supposing that they consented?"

"I don't care what it costs," said Stone. Then he explained that he had considerable accumulations from his too ample salary, and that he would gladly dissipate his hoard if, by so doing, he could pay Mr Burgoyne a really handsome compliment.

The cost, however, was far less than might have been anticipated. Leipzig and Madrid were quick to make their treasure free to Richard Burgoyne. As soon as that name had been used, Mr Stone was assured that he had only to ask for what he wanted and it would be an honour as well as a delight to carry out his commands. Even Mr Burgoyne's assistant seemed to be a big man in the opinion of Leipzig and Madrid.

Very soon the reproductions began to arrive, and Dr Wren and Mr Stone thrilled in admiration as they scrutinised the marvellous sheets—the ugly horizontal, vertical, transverse, oblique sections throwing open the hemispheres, exposing ventricles, laying bare in turn each ganglionic mass from the summit of the cerebrum to the base of the medulla oblongata ; or the circles of Golgi's method showing layers of the cortex, streaked with black fibre, spotted with black cell—charmed circles for the histologist.

But the attitude of Mr Burgoyne towards the maps had been that of a good yet obstinate child, for whom kind grown people had with pains secured a new plaything. He would

not play with the maps. He was grateful for the maps, but nothing would make him play with them. He was sensible of the compliment—he said so often. He was busy on his thought-areas, roughly shaping his chapter, and it might therefore be supposed that he would evince some interest, but he looked at the wall with an unseeing eye, or as if by enchantment the great sheets had been rendered invisible and he was not conscious that any new screen hung between him and the old books. He had now completed his chapter in the rough, had passed on from the thought-areas, had sailed far ahead without chart or sextant—by dead reckoning ; so now there was nothing for Mr Stone to do but with care roll up and put away his compliment in some capacious hiding-place.

"They really are," said Effie, "too dreadful for words. But Jack, I'm sorry Uncle Richard hasn't used them. Perhaps he will, later on. Anyhow, it was awfully nice of you to get them. You may be sure he was pleased."

"Effie, you are a trump to say that. Perhaps he *will* be glad of them later on."

Effie's eyes glowed, and for a moment her face flushed. She seemed proud and happy to be called a trump. Just now, when by implication Mr Stone said that she was pretty, she had exhibited no sign of pleasure : had appeared indeed so much engrossed by the subject under discussion as altogether to miss the personal suggestion. Now, however, she was evidently gratified.

She looked in truth very pretty this morning. She too was going out for a walk. In honour of the fine frosty weather she was wearing what happened to be at once her warmest and her very best costume—astrachan toque, collar, and cuffs ; and Turkey-red cloth, tailor-made, beautifully-fitting jacket and skirt, upon both of which garments black braid, used with consummate art, set a cachet and a grace. Mr Stone, hopelessly ignorant of how the thing was done, could yet see that it had been done becomingly : could see a pretty girl gaily yet not garishly dressed, could note at least that soft smooth brown hair and rough black fur go well together, that a delicate

complexion—rose-petal pink and porcelain white—is not necessarily killed by Turkey-red. Yet Mr Stone flatly refused to go for a walk with this really successful frock.

"Jack," said Effie, lingering when the maps were all rolled. "Are you very busy? You wouldn't like to come as far as Pier Street? There's just time before lunch."

"No thanks," said Mr Stone. "If I went out at all I'd go for a turn on my bicycle, but I won't go out before lunch."

"Oh, all right," said Effie. "Any message for Mr Ingle?" and she had turned and was on the point of going when she made a very remarkable discovery.

"Oh, Jack! But oh! What's that? *Mice?*"

A wire cage, full of hay, on the lowest shelf in the corner, just above the hot-water pipe; and in the hay, snuggling, hiding, or whisking and peeping, four or five or six pink-eyed, delightfully attractive white mice!

"Whose are they? Yours?"

"No," said Stone. "They belong to Wren."

"But why are they here?"

"Well," said Stone. "I am looking after them."

"What a funny idea!" Effie was on her knees in front of the cage. "What little pets! But, Jack, do you understand mice? They seem nice and warm. But how do you feed them? What do they have to eat?"

"Heaps of nice things. Now do jump up, Effie, and nip along, or you'll never get to Pier Street."

"All right;" and Effie, still talking of her discovery, slowly withdrew.

"It's the funniest thing," she said at the door, "that I ever heard of—Dr Wren keeping white mice and you looking after them."

In fact, the white mice were another compliment to Mr Burgoyne. And in regard to this secondary compliment Mr Burgoyne's attitude had entirely changed. It now seemed that of a grown person towards two children playing with their new toy.

Both Wren and Stone had been strongly impressed by a series of papers in a learned Vienna journal. The papers were all contributed by a quite unknown Ludwig Strauss, and this, roughly, was the line taken by the bold young German.

Herr Doktor Strauss said that physiologists are at a standstill because the chemists are lagging so far behind. Or, to be more accurate, physiologists are habitually so weak in chemistry that they have stopped themselves. To take one instance only : nerve-elements and nerve-force. The best physiologists go prosing on with their ignorant, blundering analogies—nerve fibres are telegraph wires, nerve centres are post-offices, etc. : the sort of thing that was said in the ark—and they make no serious attempt to get nearer to the essential properties and constitution of the nerves from the point of view of chemistry.

Now he has himself been hard at work in this direction, and he has arrived at a firm opinion that in the vertebrate's brain the nerve centres are extraordinarily more isolated as to function, more localised or departmented, than is, even now, generally believed. Further, he thinks that the departments are not only localised in function but localised in constitution : in a word, that nerve centres, considered chemically, vary extraordinarily in the substance of which they are composed ; that cells which are anatomically similar may yet differ essentially—built to a similar pattern but not of similar material. By this he does not mean the subtle differences that have always been suspected, but variations, slight it may be yet essential, which should admit of demonstration by improved methods of chemical analysis. In this manner he would account for a large group of little-understood facts—the localised effects of certain poisons in the blood.

Well then, seeking experimental proof of his fancies, he has been testing the effect of various alkaloid poisons—amongst others, the new drug Lentzine.

It was at this point that the young German's *confrères*, the Drs Stone and Wren, began to feel really interested.

The new drug is very similar to strychnine, and is obtained from the berries of a shrub of the order Loganiaceæ, in habit

like the Strychnos Nux Vomica but of far smaller growth. As is proper with new drugs, this one is heralded into the scientific world with a well-worn legend. In New Guinea, where Gerhard Lentz, the explorer and missionary, found the shrub, there was, it would seem, a tradition that from the berries a deadly poison had of old been drawn and used by savage warriors upon arrow-heads. But now the secret of the poison had been lost: it was a tradition only. However, Lentz thought it worth his while to send back plants and berries to Berlin to see what the Berlin chemists could make of the matter. The Berlin chemists had promptly extracted an alkaloid—much more soluble than strychnia, more soluble even than brucia—which, in honour of the traveller, they had named Lentzia. Then with equal promptness they had secured a future supply of the berries and launched the manufactured drug under the name of Lentzin.

With lentzine—a rarity, but procurable—Dr Strauss has been busy in his room amidst the chimneys of a historical German town. He recounts, among other little games, this one: played with white mice.

First, he trained the mice to know their way back from any part of the room to their cage against the wall. And here they soon showed considerable intelligence. When startled or frightened, they raced back to the cage as a safe refuge. They learned the right way home, and they remembered it.

Then, by hypodermic injection, he gave them some of the drug, and the effect produced was similar, apparently, to a slight paralysis on the right side. They became like clock-work mice, tending to run in circles, which bore always to the right: because, as they scampered along, the left legs moved freely and the right legs were impeded or checked. But this was *all* the effect. Obviously their memory was unclouded. When startled, they raced for the cage; but arrived much to the right of it, and had to try back along the wall to rectify the error. They could eat; but in picking up crumbs of cake or morsels of honey, they missed their aim at the crumbs, etc.—striking to the right of the object. They were happy, jolly

little mice as ever, except for the described symptoms, which passed off in a certain number of hours.

When he gave them a stronger dose of lentzine, they lost control of right limbs, toppled over and rolled helpless; but still seemed all right mentally. When threatened with blows, they saw and understood their danger: struggled to dodge, etc. Under still more of the poison they had convulsive fits and died.

From this experiment he deduces that the poison, giving a fine example of its selective power as a toxic agent, has worked solely in one nerve-centre—the centre that controls or co-ordinates movements on the right side: that the damage is as purely local as a speck of dust in a watch.

"I wonder," said Dr Wren, "what Mr Burgoyne would say to that," and he laughed.

Neither he nor Stone accepted the German's experiment or his deductions without question. Above all, they did not believe in the unilateral brain injury, caused by a drug which was similar to strychnine, and which should, similarly to strychnine, find its goal in the spinal cord. To Wren the whole thing seemed like a jump in the dark: hastiest of conclusions from the flimsiest of evidence. To Stone it seemed like that old and now discredited fairy-tale of Kendrick's cats and the hemiplegic symptoms after snake-bites. But he was of opinion that Mr Burgoyne would certainly be interested. After all, there might be something in it; and curiously it seemed to fall into line with the early chapters of *The Mechanism of Thought* itself. Really, what took the fancy of both men was a certain ingenuousness that went with a complete candour in the young German's narration of this and other experiments. He kept nothing back; he gave the fullest particulars of method—seeming to say: "Now, I have told you exactly how to do it. If you don't believe, do try it yourself."

"I wonder," said Wren, "if they have got it yet at Shafto's," and the same evening he wrote to the big London chemists asking if they could supply lentzine. Yes, was the reply.

Lentzin, or lentzine, as the English chemists called it, had been on sale for three months.

"Yes," said Mr Burgoyne thoughtfully, when he had read the little paper. "Yes, that is interesting. Undoubtedly, that is very interesting."

Then Stone and Wren, alone one day and chatting in the window recess before an opened cupboard, seriously discussed the question of giving Mr Burgoyne, as a humble compliment, this very easy experiment of the mice.

In a drawer there were bottles containing various poisons and a couple of jars filled with preparations used in the little botanical tricks, together with a small case of instruments that belonged to Mr Stone. Wren took from the case an ordinary hypodermic syringe and examined it with attention.

"Would this do?" he said doubtfully. "Wouldn't this cylinder be too big?"

"Not a bit," said Stone. "But I have a smaller one upstairs. I should inject at the root of the tail of course—to begin with."

"Got any ether here?" asked Wren.

"Yes. Heaps."

"You haven't any strychnine, have you?" . . . If we did it at all, I'd like to try it with strychnine."

"Oh, good lord," said Stone. "We know all about strychnine."

"Yes," said Wren. "But I mean as a check. I would like to give strychnine to one or two of the mice and compare the effects. Suppose we found the whole thing was just the same. We'd have to get another explanation then. That's the weak spot in our friend's work—no checks of any sort."

Then he asked Stone seriously: "Do you think R. B. would care about it, or should we be just bothering him?"

"Well, you heard what he said. 'Undoubtedly interesting!'"

Perhaps there the matter would have rested had it not chanced that Dr Wren, taking the short cut through the narrow lane between Harbour Wall and Pier Street, paused

before the queer little shop of Mears, dealer in old clothes, second-hand fishing tackle, stuffed birds, and live stock. Here, behind the dirty glass, amongst sailors' boots, beneath dangling yellow tarpaulins, with green parrokeets on one side of them and brown tortoises on the other, were the mice themselves. A cage full—white, lively, healthy, mutely asking for lentzine: craving for it, praying for it. “O please buy us and give us lentzine and see what you will see.” Dr Wren went into the shop, bought the mice, and it was forthwith decided to offer R. B. this second compliment.

Mr Burgoyne was averse from the experiment. It appeared to him as not free from cruelty, and as, on the whole, unnecessary: all the world knew his views with regard to physiological experiments.

“But,” said Dr Wren. “Really, sir, we sha’n’t hurt them. I don’t see how we can possibly lose a mouse in doing it. All we propose to do is to test the unilateral paralysis, with the absence of effects in the higher centres. That is the only point of interest, and we don’t want to go any further.”

“Yes,” said Mr Burgoyne, “that *is* of interest.”

“Just so,” said Dr Wren. “That’s all, sir. And unless we bungle it very stupidly, I don’t see how we can really hurt them.”

“We won’t bungle it,” said Stone confidently.

Then Mr Burgoyne acquiesced, and henceforth his attitude was that of a complaisant grown-up to two children with a new toy. Perhaps he has thought it is a thousand to one—a hundred thousand to one—that the thing cannot give him any light, but, no doubt, he has felt that it would be unkind to say so. It is, too, so much a habit of his mind to accept and weigh all evidence that, probably, he has not considered any loss of time that his young friends may cause.

Then the mice were trained—not without difficulty. The German had employed mice because mice are small and easily obtained. But no one, reading his communications, could doubt that, had it been possible, he would have used anthropoid apes, or most gladly have administered lentzine

to the concierge and his wife. However, he had praised the German mice for their intelligence, under training.

When Stone, teaching the English mice their way back to the cage, first started them, they ran all round the room and hid.

"I think," said Mr Burgoyne, "you had better bolt the door. If anyone comes and opens the door we shall have them all over the house."

A brass bolt had been put on the inside of the door to protect people from intrusion during botanical, not physiological, experiments. One summer's day when Mr Burgoyne and Mr Edmundson were counting the seed capsules of a self-fertilised hybrid pansy, that had been under treatment and observation for six long weeks, Mary unexpectedly put her head in at the door, and all the seeds flew out of the open window.

When Stone and Wren had recovered the mice, and Stone by clapping his hands once more startled them, they once more stampeded. It seemed that education would prove a lengthy process.

"Wait," said Mr Burgoyne, another day, when the mice had been taken from their warm cage and enlarged in the middle of the room. "Wait," and he moved softly to one of the French windows and opened it wide.

"Wait," and he stood watching the mice and gravely smiling.

Slowly the icy air crept from the window across the floor, and quickly the poor little mice made up their minds that the draughty floor was no place for them in this draughty weather: that their own snug nest of hay, and nowhere else, was where they wished to be. In five minutes the last of the mice was back in the cage.

"Poor little creatures," said Mr Burgoyne, shutting the window. "That is what I would do if I were you. Use a current of cold air to start them homeward. They are very sensitive and dread cold more than anything else. But if I were you, I would make an artificial link between discon-

nected phenomena. When opening the window, I would also clap my hands. You will find that the poor little creatures will draw the false deduction that inclement weather always begins with a series of loud noises. You will soon find that, acting on this erroneous belief, they will scuttle for shelter when you clap your hands *without* opening the window."

And Drs Wren and Stone found that all R. B. foretold occurred. Under the new method of education the mice were speedily trained.

VIII

THE interesting moment had come. It was soon after lunch ; the light was good ; in the big room the pattern of the dark old carpet showed clearly, as pale wintry sunbeams fell on it in almost horizontal shafts from the large windows. The test mouse had just been given strychnine and carefully deposited on the floor. Mr Stone, with the rest of the mice waiting in a wooden box, was busy with his syringe and the accurately gauged solution of lentzine.

Dr Wren, on his knees behind the test mouse, was watching it attentively ; Mr Burgoyne, standing behind him, was watching it over his shoulder. The mouse, carrying its strychnine well, ran straight forward for about a couple of feet, then stopped abruptly and sank back on its haunches. Dr Wren with his eye on the straight lines of the carpet pattern, observed that the mouse had gone dead straight till it stopped. Then, with the soft tip of a pheasant's feather, he touched it lightly ; and immediately the mouse gave a display of tetanic convulsions, and then lay rigid on its left side for a few moments. Then it got up again, and again sat on its haunches.

"I say. Have we given it too much ?"

"That's all right," said Stone. "Now, help me with this one."

The intense interest, if not excitement, of the experimentalist thrilled beneath the quiet tones of his voice, but outwardly he was calm and steady. He had shown his natural manipulative skill as he handled mouse and syringe : he would not bungle. But, in his absorbed interest, there was one thing that he had forgotten—the brass bolt on the door. No one to-day had remembered to bolt the door.

"What are you doing ?"

It was Effie's inquiring voice. The door had opened, and

now Effie stood in their midst, glancing from one to the other with wondering eyes. Drs Stone and Wren looked greatly irritated and slightly confused. Mr Burgoyne, unruffled by this interruption, looked as he had looked before the door opened—grave, dignified, imperturbable.

"Effie, dear," he said, "we are occupied. Don't disturb us."

"But what are you doing? Oh, Uncle, what are you doing?" and, as she glanced from the men to the mice, there came a catch in her breath, and her hand went to the lace scarf about her throat and pulled at it, as if, too tightly wrapped, it was beginning to suffocate her. "Uncle," she gasped, "you are doing something wicked and cruel. Oh, Uncle Richard, how can you? You are letting those men torture them."

"No, no, Effie."

"I don't believe it."

"Effie!"

But she had flung herself down on the floor by the test mouse, and was sobbing wildly. Between the sobs words came brokenly, gaspingly, difficult to understand.

"It's not true. You—you—have done—something—to this one. You—are—killing it."

"Effie," and Mr Burgoyne stooped over her. "Get up. Effie. Listen to me—"

Then the test mouse had another paroxysm. This time it gave a finer display of tetanic contractions, rigidity, and so forth; and, while the fit lasted, Effie writhed upon the floor, gasping, wailing in an agony of sympathy and horror, convulsively clutching at her throat, for all the world as though she, too, had been given strychnine.

It was, of course, the end of the experiment. This emotional storm, bursting so unexpectedly, swept away the calm spirit of scientific research. Even when the mouse had recovered its composure, rational discussion was still impossible. Effie, lifted to her feet, and with her uncle's arm about her, still sobbed and gasped and refused to listen to

reason. And when at last she seemed prepared to listen, the poor mouse had another fit—then another, and another.

"Effie," said Mr Burgoyne, very gravely, "don't say things that will cause you pain in the remembrance."

This was when the mouse was obviously getting the better of the strychnine. The paroxysms had become less and less violent, until they were little more than spasmodic tremors: the mouse would be himself again soon. Mr Stone had not blundered. But Effie tore herself from the kind arm, and with hot eyes and white, tear-stained cheeks, stood facing her uncle. And while she spoke in a breathless stammer and pulled at her lace scarf with that curious gesture as of suffocation, Wren and Stone drew away, and both looked out of the window. They and the mice and all else seemed to drop into the vague background, into shadowland, leaving only these two who loved each other, standing face to face in the light.

"I—I don't mind about them—but *you*. Oh, Uncle, how could you? You—you wrote in the newspaper—in *The Times*—that you—you thought like—Darwin."

"So I do."

"You don't. That's not true."

"Effie!"

"You—you said you held useless vivisection in abhorrence and disgust."

"This is not vivisection."

"It *is*. That's not true."

"Effie! Remember."

"It *is*. I don't care what you call it. They—they were nearly killing it—while you stood by and watched!"

It was wonderful to hear—hot youth calling honoured age to account, wisdom compelled to plead for justice from ignorance on the judgment-seat.

"Effie," and the calm, grave voice had a strange dignity. "Listen to me. Whatever I have said or written in all my life I have believed to be true. I think now what I have always thought about the infliction of unnecessary suffering. Effie, *you* should know me well enough to trust me."

"I did till to-day."

"Now listen. In what we were doing, there was very little risk—and only transient pain. The mice were safer in our hands than if we had left them to their fate—to be bought to please some foolish child, and then be killed, perhaps, by neglect—to be eaten up by the house cat, or starved when their owner went to school."

"That's not why you did it."

"No," and the voice became graver still. "This is why. Because there seemed to me a chance—just a chance—that I might learn something that might be of use to millions of unborn men. Effie, I give you my word of honour that I thought there was this chance. I weighed it well, and I *know* that I was justified."

Then Effie was silent. Something in the voice, if not the spoken words, had silenced her. Mr Burgoyne, going to Dr Wren in the window, laid a hand on his shoulder and spoke to him in low tones.

"Will you? It's very kind of you. But you see how it is. . . . You are the best of good fellows."

Then, turning from the window, Mr Burgoyne made the gratifying announcement that Dr Wren, in order to set her mind at rest, begged Effie to accept of all the mice as a present.

Effie, with eager haste, but cold thanks to Dr Wren, took the cage from Mr Stone as soon as its tenants, including the invalid, were all re-installed. Dr Wren, smiling good-humouredly, was replacing bottles and instruments in the cupboard.

"You promise," said Effie, looking at the open drawer, "that—that it won't be begun again—some time when I am out of the way."

"I give you my word," said Mr Burgoyne, "that we won't begin again."

"May I lock that drawer where the poisons are kept, and take away the key?"

"No," said Mr Burgoyne, almost sternly. "You must trust us."

"I do trust you, Uncle, and I can trust Jack. But"—and her eyes flashed as she looked across to the window—"I can't trust Dr Wren."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Effie," said Dr Wren, with the utmost good humour.

"I think," said Effie, on the threshold, to Dr Wren, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I think," said Dr Wren, "that somebody ought to be ashamed, but I'll leave to the verdict of posterity who that is, Miss Effie," and he laughed contentedly.

About an hour afterwards, at dusk, Effie returned. Mr Burgoyne was alone, in his big chair, half lost in the gathering shadows as he sat motionless, looking into the fire.

"Uncle!"

"Yes."

Very shyly she came to him; and, sitting on the arm of the chair, began to play with his watch chain—twining her fingers and gently pulling at the gold links as she used to do years ago when quite a child.

"Uncle! Was I rude? I didn't know what I was saying. . . . Did you think me ungrateful? I could never be ungrateful to you, Uncle—in my thoughts."

"No, Effie."

"But I want you to understand. I do mind so dreadfully about cruelty—about cruelty to animals. Once I knew about it—I couldn't have stopped in this house while it was going on. It would have driven me mad. Uncle, there are things that I can't think of—I feel that I should have got up in the middle of the night and thrown myself over the cliff to escape the thought of it. You understand, Uncle Richard, don't you?"

"Yes, dear. I understand perfectly."

"And you are not angry with me?"

"No, my darling."

"Because"—and she dropped the watch chain and put her arms round his neck—"because I want you to know, Uncle,

how much I love you—and honour you. Though I am so stupid, I know—Uncle, I know what you are; and I am very, very grateful. I am only a white mouse myself, compared with you."

Thus they sat—loving youth and honoured age—while the shadows deepened in the big room.

IX

EFFIE guarded her mice carefully, and took great pleasure in their society. By day they were kept in the snug little morning-room, and at night they were carried to Effie's bedroom, where a fire was lit for their benefit on each cold evening. All the household comprehended that there were two ways of dealing with mice—to destroy them with traps, etc., or to retain them as pets. When they were pets you could not do too much for them. All realised this, and no one grumbled if Miss Effie so arranged matters that, from Mary downwards to the man who cleaned the boots, each now had a little more work to do day by day.

Jack Stone was made to feel that he was completely restored to favour. Nothing explicit was said, but he could feel that he was pardoned. In the case of Dr Wren, no whisper of apology was heard for sharp words spoken in hot haste; but Dr Wren was permitted to infer that the past was to be forgotten. All was happiness and smiles now: he might bask in the smiles without uneasy dread that by any allusion or veiled hint he would be reminded of a very dark episode in his career. It was for him now to live it down. All was smiles and happiness; all went smoothly and joyously with Effie and her mice—until the night of the amateur theatricals.

Miss Granger and other clever amateurs were presenting—for the second time in five years—that charming drama, *Plot and Passion*. All intelligent Whitebridge that liked a really good evening's entertainment must to the Assembly Rooms—Effie with the rest. But the weather was diabolically unpropitious. There had been sharp frost, then a half-hearted thaw; and now came boisterous wind, and driving rain that tapped the window-panes with ice needles instead of washing them with rain-drops. There were difficulties, but they were

surmounted. The roads were slippery, but Benson's cab-horses had all been roughed; Sturgess was an old, tried coachman: all had been arranged. Effie's fly would first pick up kind Mrs Townley, wife of the vicar, and staunchest of chaperons, then come to Cliff Lodge for Effie. Mrs Townley, after the play, would drop Effie at the Lodge porch ere she dropped herself at her own door.

Effie was not the only inmate of the Lodge who counted on being lifted from dull earth into a strange world of glamour and delight by the magic wands of Miss Granger and her company. It was as much to the household's convenience as to Effie's that dinner to-night was at such an early hour. Mary and Sarah were going; everyone knew that the cook was going: it was said, but not generally believed, that the kitchen maid was *not* going. Too cruel it were to keep Elizabeth as Cinderella of the Lodge. No questions need be asked. If, behind cook's broad back, ducking as cook turns to survey the audience, Cinderella, flushed from her run, crouch on unreserved bench near the door, who shall blame her? Not Effie, sitting now at early dinner, bright-eyed, excited, finding sole or cutlet but a dusty, choking food when she thinks that already the lights are lit in the dim hall, already Miss Granger is rouging her white face and giving last dabs to her red, red lips.

Then, at this last moment, when Mary and Jane are pushing to lightning speed the service of sweet or savoury—a note from Mrs Townley. The wife of the vicar cannot say it is influenza, but, in its suddenness especially, it seems sufficiently akin to influenza to render it highly imprudent, in the opinion of the vicar, etc., etc., etc.

"It is unfortunate," says poor Effie, in a flat, toneless voice. "But really it does not matter"; and she strives—poor child—not to show in her eyes a last faint flicker of hope as she looks at Mrs Burgoyne.

Mrs Burgoyne has strenuously refused to attend the performance. She is untouched by Miss Granger's art, cold to the appeal of *Plot and Passion*: she will by no means

consent to leave her husband for the long, dull evening. Yet now, at the very last moment, she will go. Rather than disappoint Effie, she will go. Mr Stone—efficient chaperon for the bicycle—of course cannot with propriety be sent as escort on this public occasion. Moreover, Mr Stone's distaste for the theatre is scarcely less deep than his distaste for church.

"*It is sweet of you, Aunt Sybil*"—and Effie's voice is full in tone once more—"but I oughtn't to let you. I feel dreadfully selfish."

It is long past eleven when Mr Benson's fly comes grating and scraping to the door with the returning play-goers. The waits between the acts have been prodigious ; but the performance has been a triumphant success ; three times has Miss Granger been recalled to bow her acknowledgments to a vociferous Whitebridge. With this great news Sybil and Effie burst in upon Mr Burgoyne quietly dozing by the drawing-room fire.

"Capital, capital," says Mr Burgoyne, alert in a moment. "Sit you down both, and tell me all about it—from the beginning to the end," and he points to the tray that invites them to cakes and biscuits, lemonade and barley water. "Not so bad after all—eh, Sybil?"

Two well-contented, happy girls they look—gracious and charming, after their pleasure of the last few hours, in their pleasure at being by the home fireside again. Sybil Burgoyne, the elder girl, has a cloak with a sable collar ; there is more than the normal colour in her face ; buffeted by the wind just now in the porch, her dark hair has been blown about her forehead, and her eyes for a moment glow as from beneath a dusky veil. Effie, the younger girl, has a long silk cloak of a pale blue, with swansdown round her white neck : she is all softness, whiteness, radiant with the afterglow of childlike, innocent joy. Who that did not know, could believe, seeing them thus side by side, that the younger girl is well past eighteen, and that the elder girl is nearly thirty-three?

"I'll be down again in a minute," says Effie, "to tell you *everything*"; and, trailing her blue cloak over her arm, she

sweeps out into the hall. She must see that all is well on the first floor ere she can eat cake or biscuits.

In the corridor upstairs she is met by an icy wind—the cold breath of disaster. The door of her room is open; the cruel wind meets her and chills her; and, beyond the door, hidden in the black vault of the fireless room, tragedy—most gruesome—awaits her.

Then very soon, when with shaking hands she has closed the window and lit a candle, those below hear her cry of horror and grief.

The neglected fire had long since gone out. The wind had burst open the window casement, had burst open the door, had torn down a sheltering rug, had sent the rain tapping with remorseless ice-fingers upon table, chairs, and floor. The cage was festooned, draped, girt about with ice-embroidery, and, within the nest of stiffened hay, the mice had been frozen to death.

Effie was inconsolable. “I shall never forgive myself. To my dying day I shall never forgive myself”—that was the burden of her lament. Everyone was kind to her: all tried to lighten her heavy load. It was not her fault. It was the fault of the hard world—the brutal, unthinking, unyielding laws of nature. By no precautions can one avert such and kindred disasters. The careless servants were to blame. All the house had gone to the play. *Very wrong!* Some sort of inquiry should be made; really, it was *too* much. Most of all to blame was Cinderella, the kitchenmaid, who also had gone to the play, who had forgot aught else, had neglected bedroom fires, had left the Lodge to take care of itself as best it might. Inquiry here and swift doom—disgrace and dismissal: no less? But Effie wished for no inquiry, no punishments. What did it matter? She only was to blame, because in her only had the sacred trust been reposed. She, and no one else, had assumed the rôle of Fate for the white mice.

Mr Burgoyne talked to her much; stopped the *Mechanism*, abandoned his task, and gave her all his philosophy—without avail.

"Really and truly, you need not be so sorry, dear."

Again they were alone together in the workroom : he, with his arm about her ; she, staring at the fire.

"Uncle, I want you to tell me exactly what they felt."

"Very well. I will tell you all that I can, dear, but that is very little."

"What did they feel? I want to know."

"They suffered—for some while. They moved restlessly. Mentally, they could feel only this much—what a little child of two, lost, might feel—a dull despair, a vague sense of injustice and hopelessness : that the world has used it cruelly—but dimmer even than the child's sense."

"Yes; horrible!"

"Effie, I tell you, because that is what I believe. Others would say no thought of this kind was possible. But that I do not believe."

"Then?"

"Then—soon—torpor invaded them. They curled themselves for sleep—their long sleep. Not like men—they did not resist. Very soon consciousness was gone—they suffered no more."

"I think—I shall never forgive myself. Until I die, I shall remember."

Dr Wren talked to her. She was in bed now—ill.

Then, coming downstairs after a long conversation with the patient, Dr Wren talked to Mr and Mrs Burgoyne.

"I should send her away," said Dr Wren, with a firmness and decision that gave a sudden strangeness to his pleasant good-humoured manner. "I should send her away—among new faces, new surroundings—a complete change."

Yes—Mr Burgoyne agreed at once—they would arrange for her to go away for a change directly she felt well enough to get up and undertake a journey.

"No," said Dr Wren. "I would not wait for that. I would send her now."

Yes. But where? Then Richard Burgoyne thought of his

old friend, Tom Frodsham. My lord and his two granddaughters, the lively Miss Broomhalls, were now at Bevis Castle. A telegram should be sent to Bevis. They knew what the reply would be. A carriage should be procured, and Effie should be driven over to Bevis this very day.

"No," said Dr Wren firmly, "that won't do. Bevis is too near here—too like this house. Not enough of a change. Nowhere in the country would do—London."

Then, with further discussion, another plan was suggested. Sybil Burgoyne recoiled from the thought of leaving her husband for so long—"a fortnight for the very least," but nevertheless she would take Effie to London and plunge her into the whirl of gaiety and amusement—picture galleries, winter sales at the big drapers', and many theatres—ordered by the physician. Mrs Burgoyne must make this sacrifice of her inclination for Effie's sake. There seemed no escape from the sacrifice. But then the physician came to the rescue.

"You would not be the best person," said Dr Wren thoughtfully. "Why don't you send her with Mrs Townley? *She'd* jump at it."

In this manner, the arrangement was happily settled. Most fortunately, kind Mrs Townley's harrassing mock-influenza was just such an ailment as might be cured by the course of treatment prescribed for Effie. The mere notion of three weeks at a luxurious hotel, with blank cheques, carte blanche, etc., did her good. Sustained by the notorious high living of modern London, she would not falter or in any wise shrink from the ordeal; she would carry through the treatment with relentless vigour; she would take dear Effie to every theatre now open—always, of course, excepting those houses to which, in the opinion of a vicar's wife, it would be altogether inadvisable to take a young, unmarried girl. She regarded the charge imposed on her by dear Mr Burgoyne as a great honour as well as a great pleasure—and *she was now packing*. In a word, she jumped at it.

From the grand first floor rooms of the grand London Hotel Mrs Townley was able, conscientiously, to despatch most wel-

come reports. The cure was progressing. Effie was eating well, talking well, laughing well—indeed, she and the “dear child” had laughed till the tears rolled from their eyes last night at Drury Lane. Mrs Townley felt sure that past distresses were dropping far behind them ; painful impressions were fading ; facts still remembered were losing their disproportionate strength. She thought that *new* things, pouring like a flood into Effie’s mind, were pushing out old things, in order to make room ; and this, she opined, must be a fact with *all* human minds. Then she skittishly asked Mrs Burgoyne to ask Mr Burgoyne : “If London has not turned me into quite a philosopher ?” Mrs Townley was most anxious not to set up her poor little opinion against that of a skilled physician. But had Dr Wren in his calculations given adequate allowance to the element of *Time*? It was a famous cure, but it should not be hurried. This was Mrs Townley’s poor little opinion.

Then, after she had been away a month, Effie wrote piteously. She had long been really and truly well ; and she was most woefully home-sick. “*Do let me come home,*” wrote Effie, “*even if Mrs Townley stops.*”

And next day home she came, with colour in her cheeks and light in her eyes, cured ; and, oh, so glad to get back to dear uncle and aunt—and everyone at Cliff Lodge.

X

ONE evening Stone and Mrs Burgoyne walked through the sheltered hollow, and by a zigzag path up the green terraces towards the first of the sentinel windmills. It was Easter Saturday—a late Easter—and girls were carrying clothes-baskets full of primroses for the church decoration. Effie had been at the church or the vicarage since early morning.

“We might,” said Mr Stone, “go on and see if Effie has done her work.”

“No,” said Mrs Burgoyne, “I don’t want to leave him for so long as that. It would take too long. She would be sure to keep us waiting. But you go.”

Mr Stone, however, as a responsible escort, would not desert his charge. To-day Mr Burgoyne had not been outside the house. He was nursing a slight cold—only a roughness in the throat: a mere nothing, said Dr Wren after seeing the august patient in a friendly amateur way, but it was wise to make him stay indoors. Now, when the yellow light was tinting the lower streamers of the clouds and the brightness of the fair spring day was waning, Mr Stone had advised, had urged, and at last persuaded Mrs Burgoyne to come out and breathe the fresh air.

In the hollow there were lovers—the first of the season: two couples of Easter trippers, with arms interlaced, walking silently upon the moss carpet, pausing to stare with Cockney wonder at violets and daffodils, like stolid ghosts disappearing among the white stems of the beech-trees.

As Mr Stone and his companion passed swiftly beneath the budding branches, they talked of the great man’s cold and the great man’s headaches. Of late there had been so few headaches. Mrs Burgoyne, as she measured the lengthening intervals between the wasted days, rejoiced in the worker’s

immunity from the old attacks. It seemed that the immunity would ere long be complete. Even this cold had brought on none of the old lassitude and pain. What better sign could one have that her husband's health was steadily improving, instead of insidiously deteriorating as the years glided by?

"Do you know," said Stone, "I am not sure that it is such a good sign."

"Oh, how can it be anything else?"

"George Wren thinks it is—at any rate—not the best of signs. It has been making him anxious."

In the companionship of the daily task, in the freedom of the family intercourse, they had come to deal with each other habitually in a tone of extraordinary frankness. The reticences and secrets that are maintained even between brother and sister were absent here. They were sexless comrades, two fellow-workers, two hard-working assistants between whom outward forms and the ceremonious art that dresses serious thoughts in pretty soothing words would be most palpably absurd. In her day's work Mrs Burgoyne was necessarily brought face to face with nature; the common laws of life and of death were known to her; in her humble unquestioning way she was a sound biologist—sounder all round, probably, than Lord Frodsham, F.R.S.; she had read her husband's books, had studied with painstaking ardour such portions of them as she could understand. One need not fear to shock her sense of delicacy, to fill her with foolish feminine repulsions, or to frighten her, if one spoke of men and women as they are and not as they are painted by our nursery governesses.

Thus Mr Stone, speaking of her husband, seemed without thought or hesitation to give her plain facts instead of sympathetic courtesies.

"George liked his recurrent bilious attacks. He liked to see the safety valve acting. My doubt has always been whether his headaches *were* bilious. They seemed to me purely nervous—I mean directly traceable to nerve fatigue."

"But you know, he used now and then to be really sick—very rarely, but sometimes——"

"George Wren says he is positive it was bile and nothing else. But, assuming George to be right—he generally is—what is going on now? That's what we have to think of. No. At his age—and considering that his life is exactly what it was—no change in work or custom—I don't think we ought to count on the absence of the headaches as a good sign."

Mrs Burgoyne had stopped, and upward lines showed themselves on her smooth forehead as the brows contracted in thought. She listened attentively, without foolish fear, but weighing every word.

"Does Dr Wren suggest anything?" she said slowly. "If he is anxious—*Anxious* is a big word."

"Too big for the occasion. He did not use it. No, no. He is quite content—he suggests nothing."

"But he would be glad for the headaches to come back?"

"No. I can't say that. No, he did not say that. . . . No, you can take this as a fact. Wren did not think it was a good sign. That is all. Don't let me confuse my vague thoughts with Wren's matter-of-fact view."

"Yes. I understand. He would have spoken to me if he had thought anything should be done—he would never keep me in the dark, would he?"

"No. You may rely on George Wren. I am sure we may rely on him absolutely. He is a grand watch-dog."

Then, as they walked on, mounting by the zigzag path, Mrs Burgoyne's forehead became smooth again. Dr Wren was only anxious as they all must be—unceasingly careful, unceasingly thoughtful. In that sense, anxiety was not too big a word: it was the proper word.

But there was something that jarred in the tone of her companion as once more he spoke of Dr Wren as a watch-dog.

"A born watch-dog—that's what George is. By nature and by training—a good dog to stand and watch and watch and never bark a false alarm."

She did not speak, but he glanced at her rapidly, and then laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Am I shocking you? It's a grand thing to be a watch-

dog—a better thing than ranging over the plain and pretending you are a lion. Well, that's George's doctrine. What do *you* think?"

"I think," said Mrs Burgoyne slowly and gravely, "that it is always good to do one's work as well as one can; and I don't think *you* are speaking kindly of your friend—or of my husband."

"How like a woman!" and Mr Stone laughed again, and his voice became hard and almost angry. "You—you make me talk to you with absolute freedom. You—you teach me to confide in you and then in a moment you misunderstand. You know that I like George Wren. You know—well enough—what my feelings are towards Mr Burgoyne——"

"Yes, I do know," said Mrs Burgoyne humbly. "I am sorry. I like you to confide in me."

"Good lord. Haven't I shown that I respect George Wren and his doctrine too?" and he laughed irritably. "I follow his advice. I am obeying his orders now. As a good watchdog he watches all the world. George watches me and George watches *you*," and he laughed now good-humouredly. "It was on George's orders that I bothered *you* to come out now. George says, you don't get enough air or enough exercise."

On the uppermost terrace they paused, and Mrs Burgoyne again meekly apologised for having supposed that Mr Stone was speaking unkindly. She knew that he could not harbour a disloyal thought: she knew that he trusted and liked Dr Wren. But she wanted now to know what Dr Wren had said about Mr Stone's own health. As to herself—she was very well. It was nonsense to say that she did not go out enough. But what had the watchful doctor said of Mr Stone?

As they stood side by side, looking down upon the tree-tops and the hidden paths, she asked him many questions. Up here it was silent and peaceful in the yellow evening light, with nothing visible of common life, with nothing stirring but the great sails of the first of the windmills on the ridge above their heads. The gentle breeze, the peaceful scene, the slowly fading light seemed exactly what clever Dr Wren would have

prescribed to soothe highly strung nerves and allay mental irritability. Yet here, in the calm, Mrs Burgoyne by kind questioning aroused at last a nerve storm that rendered her pale and breathless by its surprising violence.

She had made him confess that Dr Wren had once or twice of late sounded notes of warning. She had made him confess with contrition that his irritability just now was abnormal—effect without due cause. She had asked him question after question. Then suddenly, most violently, he let loose his secret thoughts, and she recoiled almost in horror.

He was not happy in his work. Sometimes he was miserably unhappy.

“Of course I think of it. I am a cursed failure. Do you know what I used to think? I would do something great—something to shake the world. Boyish dreams—as Wren calls them. But I had narrowed my dream—before I met Wren. I never told him that. I had begun to know myself—Nothing great, perhaps, something useful—but still, *something*.”

“But isn’t it enough to be associated with *him*? ”

“Yes, that ought to be, but sometimes it isn’t. Extinction of self! Yes”—and with a clenched hand he struck his breast —“but this *I* fights for life sometimes, and then I know what the old monks felt—

“You can’t understand—no woman can. You women have learnt your lesson. You *can* crush out the longings, freeze the instinct of the blood with streams of cold thought. The nuns never suffered as the monks did—

“In men’s lives the flesh dies hard. I tell you there are days when I feel I shall go mad—melancholy mad—when I think of it—not of noble hopes that are gone, but of the base things I am called on to renounce: the pleasures of the senses, the things the intellect *spurns*. When I see some bounder walking with his girl along the cliff—when I see them walking like savages, I—I feel a savage myself—and I could leap at him, take him by the throat, strangle him, throw him over the cliff and laugh . . . and then, then—in thought—I am alone with his squeaking, whimpering mate—with his helpless,

shrinking squaw—with his feathered and flounced young lady”; and with burning eyes he looked at Mrs Burgoyne’s pale, sad face.

Then, making a violent effort to recover his composure, he laughed before he spoke again.

“Don’t be shocked. All thought—no action. I have killed action—really. I am a thinking machine. No—a machine for another man’s thoughts to work in—a drudge: and I see myself twenty years hence—a useless drudge, then—a rusty, worn-out machine that is not worth repairing.”

Mrs Burgoyne was in truth horror-stricken. Her voice became cold and very grave.

“You have broken the spell of our quiet life. You—you have made me miserable. But as you have said all this, there are things that I must tell you. My husband has weighed the sacrifice you make in helping him. I know that he has made provision for your future—he is fond of you, as well as grateful to you. I know—as a fact—that, whatever happened, you would be secure. Years hence—as you say—you could never have to struggle, to begin again—you could be happy and idle when your work was done.”

As she spoke, her eyes filled with tears; and, as Stone answered, his voice suddenly broke in a sob.

“There never was anyone like him—there never can be. Oh, what a worm it makes me feel—even to think of him. Mrs Burgoyne—on my honour—I am not mercenary.. I have never given a thought to money—when thinking of the future. I wish you hadn’t told me this—it makes me more ashamed of myself than ever——”

Plainly, Mr Stone was ashamed of himself. Humbly—almost abjectly—he begged Mrs Burgoyne to forgive him and to forget.

“Mrs Burgoyne, don’t think of it. It’s nothing. If I were a girl—people would say hysteria. Well, it is—weakness. No strong man would have talked as I have talked—but I am not strong—you know—I am weak by constitution. Say you’ll forget.”

"Yes, but one question. How long have you felt this? Not all the time you have been with us?"

"Oh, no. Only lately. It's nothing—a phase—I understand it really. The awakening of the flesh—no, the last base struggle—the old mean war: the revolt of body against mind. There. I'll live it down. I promise you."

"Yes, live it down," and she laid her hand upon his arm, and he felt that her hand was trembling. "Don't break the peace of our quiet life. I loved to think of it," and as she glanced away to the vast wooden sails swinging their heavy circles, driven by the force of the unseen wind, she shivered. "I loved to think that nothing could disturb our calm."

"And nothing can. Don't think of me. I'm a selfish beast. Mrs Burgoyne, I should like to kick myself all the way home."

The light was fading quickly as side by side they walked down the hillside. In the hollow it was dark already: beneath the trees it was as if they passed through black caves. Then the ascending paths showed again dimly and greyly; and climbing once more, they reached the faint afterglow on the cliff-top. As he opened the hall door he asked her again to forget.

"It is all nonsense. I am very happy—nothing but stupid nerves—of which I am most heartily ashamed. You'll forget all I said?"

"Yes. I'll forget. I want to forget it."

The lamp was lit in the hall, and for a moment she shaded her eyes, dazzled by the quick transition from the darkness of the porch. Then, drawn by the sound of her husband's voice, she turned towards the dining-room, opened the door abruptly; and then, stepping back, gently shut it again. Mr Burgoyne was not—as she had surmised—sitting with Effie and assuring himself that Effie had a substantial bread and jam tea after all her lengthened labours at the church: Mr Burgoyne was receiving callers.

At the head of the table sat Mr Burgoyne, tapping softly with his gold pencil case upon the green baize while he talked in low, serious tones. On the far side of the table, Mr Ingle,

the hairdresser, was walking to and fro, nodding his head while he listened, or pointing with his forefinger at Mrs Ingle, who, in a most prodigious picture hat, sat on the near side of the table with her back to the door.

"They've been here half-an-hour and more," said Mary, plaintively explaining matters to her mistress, "and I on'y wish the master would send them away. It's more than time we had the room to lay the cloth."

Mr Ingle, in despair, had brought his troublesome wife with him to consult the oracle; and, obtaining audience, had delivered a most extraordinary harangue.

Mrs Ingle, according to her angry husband, could not be permitted to carry on as she was now carrying on. She had lost all sense of proportion; she behaved as though she did not know who was who, what was what, or when was when. Neighbours—old friends of his—had given her friendly hints, and she only snapped their heads off. That was all the thanks they got. But he wasn't going to let things drift until he became the laughing-stock of Harbour Wall. It must be put a stop to now, at once, for ever.

"This," said Mrs Ingle, smiling at Mr Burgoyne archly, "is a fair sample of what I get at home—by the hour."

But no interruptions checked Mr Ingle in his harangue. He had no personal objection to the lad Karl. None whatever. Karl was as good an assistant as he had ever employed. Moreover, if he sacked Karl to-morrow, the whole thing would begin again the day after with the new assistant. Karl had never been inside a theatre, or wanted to go there, till she taught him how to waste his money and stuff his head with pernicious rubbish.

"Karl's a mere boy," said Mrs Ingle contemptuously. "Besides, why doesn't he take me to the theatre himself?"

No man, continued Mr Ingle, worked harder than he did—no, not in all Whitebridge. He had made the business what it was, and he never spared himself in his efforts to keep the business together and expand the business. But he wanted rest and ease by his own fireside when, ready to drop, he

turned the lights out in the saloon and bolted the shop door. Then, at last, Mr Ingle reached his peroration, and, turning, directly addressed the offender.

"So now perhaps you'll listen. There he sits," and he pointed to Mr Burgoyne. "He is a member of the Royal Society of all England. He is a magistrate. He is sought after," said Mr Ingle, concluding after all somewhat lamely: "he is sought after by every visitor that comes into this town—as a very well-known gentleman. Now, perhaps you'll listen to what he says!"

It was a most protracted sitting.

For a little time it seemed that the quiet, kindly voice from the head of the table would make peace and order, and then in a moment all was noise and chaos again.

"If," cried Ingle, "a man plays a cornet at the end of the street, she is gone. Mad for pleasure. You know you are. *Mad* for pleasure, and it can't go on."

Again the disturbance was quelled, and wise words seemed about to lead to a compromise. Then, with a happy settlement close at hand, war and not truce filled the air.

"Yes; and suppose," Mr Ingle was saying, "I was to turn round and slap your face for you?"

"You try it," said Mrs Ingle hotly. "That's all. You just try it."

"Tut, tut," said Mr Burgoyne, tapping on the table. "Ingle, Ingle! Really, Mrs Ingle."

Yet finally—long, long after Mary should have laid the cloth—the quiet friendly tones prevailed, the tapping pencil beat out the fires.

"There," said Ingle, making loud interjections while the gentle voice flowed on. "That's common-sense. There, that's common-sense. You've been forced to listen," said Ingle triumphantly, "because it's common-sense."

"Yes," said Mrs Ingle, "and *you* listen too. He says you're as much to blame as me."

Doubtless, said Mr Burgoyne, more consideration should be shown on both sides. Neither was free from blame. Certainly

not Mrs Ingle—and certainly not Mr Ingle. They knew that really : they must know that. But with all this noisy talk they were like people beating the air, exhausting themselves with vain fury : nothing in this world could ever come of *talk*. They should for a change *think* : and not always for themselves, but each for the other. They must mentally change places. Ingle then would realise that music, light, and laughter are very good things in their way, and Mrs Ingle would understand that to shirk the realities of home duty and pursue with frenzy the flitting shadows thrown upon her path by far-off clouds was neither business-like nor becoming ; and Mr Burgoyne bowed gravely and yet gallantly to the lady in the picture hat.

"I think," said Mr Burgoyne, with his eyes so steadily bearing upon the lady's eyes that these suddenly drooped, "you should always remember that in your soft hands you hold, as well as your husband's heart—your husband's honour."

Then at last, in silence, peace was ratified, and Mr and Mrs Ingle went home, arm-in-arm, to the neglected saloon and the wondering Karl.

XI

MR BURGOYNE smiled as he glanced at his niece's open portfolio.

Miss Effie, who was so fond of tidying for others, was not the tidyest person herself. The light air from the open windows had blown Effie's papers on to the floor—sheets of paper here and there, far and near : an unfinished letter, two directed envelopes, a pencil, and the drawings. Mr Burgoyne, stooping, gathered together the papers and then with a grave smile stood looking at the drawings.

The sheet that held his attention was covered with Effie's pencil-work : studies in outline of a man's face. All of one face, the outlines seemed apparently—a Grecian type, but too lean for classic standards, clean-shaven—in profile again and again—dozens of them heavily scratched out with a licked pencil, but dozens remaining : by their success escaping obliteration. Mr Burgoyne put back this sheet with the others very carefully ; and, closing the portfolio, laid on top Effie's tin box of water-colours to checkmate the untidy wind.

At dinner that night Mr Burgoyne refrained from taxing his niece with the disorder in which he had found her room. He might have instituted a really serviceable little joke by threatening Effie that if she were not careful he would carry the war into the enemy's country and, marching out of his room into hers, gave her a severe tidying up ; but he allowed his opportunity to slip by. Once or twice his clear blue eyes were turned upon his niece when she was quite unobservant of him —once, especially, when she was speaking to Mr Stone.

Mr Stone, twiddling the thin stem of a wine glass, seemed preoccupied with thought ; plainly, his mind was working far away.

“Jack,” said Effie, “I rode to Slanes to-day.”

"Did you?" said Mr Stone, really not listening.

"And I saw that old woman."

"Did you?"

"She was sitting outside her door—just the same—mending the nets—and she beckoned to me."

"Did she?"

"I don't think she is quite right in her mind."

"Sir!" says Stone, alert of a sudden, "the name of that book has come to me! *The Memoirs of Count Jules le Meunier, Chemist to Louis XV.*"

"Thank you, Stone," says Mr Burgoyne, without looking at the young man.

He is looking at Effie, who has turned away her head; and he sees what perhaps no one else would see. Her pretty lips tremble: she is taking quick inspirations.

"Yes, sir, that's the book. I don't say that's exactly the title, but that is the man's name. . . . Effie, forgive me. I am very rude—but I wanted to tell Mr Burgoyne before I forgot it again. I have been trying to remember for a week," and Mr Stone smiles. "Do please tell me about the old woman."

Then Effie turns again, smiles again, talks again; and Mr Burgoyne watches her—for a very few moments. The light has come back to her pretty eyes: she is giving slow expirations.

Mr Burgoyne was sauntering in the garden, talking to the head gardener. He had lingered in the greenhouses meditatively considering some funny little begonia hybrids, and, aided by a camel's-hair pencil and a knitting needle which the gardener had brought out of a drawer, trifling with the contractile organs of some highly irritable members of the family Cynaraceæ; and now he was slowly strolling again in the genial sunlight.

In this bright Maytime the garden was lovely. The wistaria and the lilacs were in full bloom. Beneath the dark masses of the ilex, the fresh green of the young leaves gladdened the eye; the stunted fruit-trees looked like trees after a snow-storm, like trees after a carnival, and with their pink and

white blossoms—nature's confetti—strewed the swept paths and trim borders as though in fun behind the gardener's back ; in the air there was a perfume of flowers, and the fragrance of new cut grass as the daisies danced and fell before the busy mowing machine. High overhead the sea-wind blew and soaring gulls flashed from grey to dazzling white as the sunlight caught the under surface of their motionless wings.

At the bottom of the garden, the summer-house, like a proud and solid little fort, rose high above the flint wall and the green door through which one reached the cliff. Above, there was a good-sized room, to which one mounted by a flight of stone steps ; and beneath, a gardener's lumber-room—wherein lay mouldering, amidst wicker chairs and iron seats, unused bowls, croquet mallets, and impossibly warped tennis racquets. Here, by the steps, Mr Burgoyne readily gave his full authority for the usual repainting of the green door, and, with a friendly nod, permitted the gardener to return to his work.

The upper room—"the lookout" with its three windows—was really both quaint and pretty. There was a good fireplace framed in gay blue tiles ; there was a glass-fronted cupboard full of blue china, an old Dutch dresser, round two of the walls, a long seat, covered with coloured chintz ; and there were deep wicker chairs and bright cushions in profusion. Truly a pleasant room from which you looked down at the wide sea as at a limitless sheet of glass and watched the distant ships, or from which you looked up at the blue sky as from a balloon and watched the soaring gulls. There was always a gentle breeze up here. In the blazing summer hours Mr Burgoyne would sometimes come here to rest in one of the cushioned chairs—and even to scribble or dictate. But this was rarely. Gradually it had become as much Effie's room as the room in the house. Here she had read with her governess, entertained her child-friends years ago ; here, from the very first, year after year, she had painted in water-colours maplike studies of Britannia's Realm—never getting it quite to her taste. And here Mr Burgoyne found her now, at her table before the middle window, still bravely daubing.

"May I come in, dear?"

"O Uncle Richard, *do*."

Mr Burgoyne took Effie's chair and, drawing it in to the table, examined the wet sketch with thoughtful admiration while the artist stood behind him, resting one small hand upon his shoulder.

"What a skilful little girl! Upon my word, Effie—so far as I understand these matters—this is very creditable. I do not say that it is conventionally correct—I think, perched up here, one must suffer constraint from those horrid laws of perspective; but you give an impression."

"Oh no, Uncle Richard. It's dreadful—really."

"But no. You give *me*, at least, quite an impression. What a skilful little girl."

Effie would have sat on the arm of his chair and linked her hands round his neck—she was so much gratified; but he had drawn his chair too far under the table to allow space for anyone else. As he talked he looked far out to sea; and Effie, standing behind him, looked out above his head.

"A little girl—but that's what you used to be, Effie. A little girl no more. Can it be really true that it was your nineteenth birthday—this last one?"

"Yes."

"O Effie. Why don't you hold the years for me? Why do you let them fly—you careless child?"

"I wish I could hold them—for you."

"But not for yourself. Quite right. So now you are nineteen—Effie. A child no more. A woman, really. A woman—who has pushed a door, and stepped into the wonderland of love."

"Uncle!"

"Why not, my darling? You broke no bars—the door was open."

He had not turned his head. In the long pause before she spoke again, he watched the far-off ships.

"But—Uncle Richard, *how* did you find out?"

"Oh, I put things together. You see, my dear, I am always

doing that—putting two and two together—not always making four of them, I dare say.”

“I think you are a magician.”

“Am I? But a good magician, Effie—who means to help you if he can.”

Then the white hands were linked about his neck, and a soft cheek that had not ceased to burn was pressed against his grey hair.

“Pull back your chair—a little way. I want to sit beside you . . . Uncle. You won’t tell—not anyone? Not even Aunt Sybil?”

“No. But there is someone who may know—who does know—who guesses already, isn’t there? . . . Tell me, dear, about him. . . . That’s what I want you to tell me.”

“Uncle, I don’t know what to tell you.”

“Well, you know how they put it in Mr Hind’s novels. He has not *spoken*? ”

“No.”

“That was quite right. It is to *me* that he must speak. But of course he loves my Effie?”

Then, with hands linked tight, Effie for a little while was silent.

“Uncle Richard, you are the only person in all the world that I could talk to like this. . . . Yes, I do think—I do hope Jack is—fond of me. This is what I think, Uncle. He would tell me so—or tell you so—but, being poor, he thinks it would be so hopeless—you would never, never let us be engaged.”

“That’s how it is, is it?”

“You see, I don’t think I could have got so fond of him, unless he was fond of me—I couldn’t, could I?—That’s how he’s *made* me love him. I tried not to—O Uncle, ever so hard!—till all at once I thought I was quite sure. Uncle, I couldn’t tell you why. But things he said—so many things; and, something in his voice when *I* was with him. . . . But, Uncle, suppose I’m wrong—you understand I’d sooner die than let him guess I thought so.”

“I don’t think you are wrong, my dear. . . . And now you

have thought enough. Leave me to do the thinking—your old magician."

"Remember. No one to know that I care for him—not even Auntie Sybil."

"I promise. And don't think of it again—except as something in your uncle's mind. . . . But you may trust me, Effie. I promise I'll not blunder."

When the two ladies left the dining-room the two gentlemen invariably went with them, but to-night Mr Burgoyne invited Mr Stone to sit down and smoke a cigarette.

"Have your smoke in here, will you, Stone? The fact is, my dear fellow, I want a little friendly chat with you."

"Yes, sir. But I won't smoke."

"Nonsense. Light up. I don't mind a bit—I'll join you, if you'll give me one."

Then Mr Stone produced his cigarette case and host and guest each lit a cigarette. It was wonderful to see Mr Burgoyne smoking—puffing the little white clouds very slowly and carefully, watching them while they floated and broke, as if anxious, should a ring by chance emerge, that he might not fail to observe it. He had smoked thus for half-a-century—on an average probably not more than once a year.

"Stone, my dear fellow, I have been thinking of late—thinking quite seriously of your future."

"O sir, please never think of me."

"No? But of course I must think of you—not impertinently, Stone, but as a friend must think of a friend," and Mr Burgoyne blew out little clouds and watched them intently. "Stone—I have great confidence in you—and I have a great regard for you——"

"I wish I could tell you, sir, what my gratitude——"

"Gratitude! Nonsense. No question of gratitude, Stone, but I hope—I think—you give me—kindly feeling in return for kindly feeling. . . . Yes, yes, I am sure you do. Well, then, I'll find my words another turn—and leave them quite as true. I have been thinking of my own future."

"Yes, sir."

"We thinkers are apt to turn into selfish old dogs, Stone—if we are not very careful—to shirk all trouble, to dread all change. We like the firelit hearth, dozing and dreaming, while life flows and ebbs, and are quick to growl and snap if strangers come between us and the genial warmth. That's what your old dog dreads—they say—that anyone should rob him of the cheerful glow. But I am not like that, Stone."

"Indeed you are not, sir."

"Thinking of my future I have learnt to face all losses. I am hard and dry—a grey old dog to look at, Stone, but within I boast myself there's not much atrophied—as yet. . . . For instance, there's Miss Effie. Beyond my wife there's no one whom I love as I love Effie. It's deep and strong, my love—no old man's bond of habit. She has wound herself about my heart, Stone, and if ever she were torn away my heart would bleed most sorely."

He laid aside his unfinished cigarette, and he sat now with his forehead resting on one hand, while with the foresinger of the other he traced out the long fibres of the flower pattern on the table-cloth.

"That's only an instance, Stone. Just lately I have been thinking of her—realising that I cannot hope to keep her here for ever, that sooner or later some happy young fellow will want to rob me of my heart's delight—will claim his right to break the fibres of my love and leave me to heal the wound as best I can. Well, I won't be selfish—or a coward. No one will see me wince. But that's only an instance, Stone."

For a moment his eyes had lifted and he seemed to study the young man's thoughtful face. Mr Stone, slowly finishing his cigarette, seemed deeply interested, deeply sympathetic.

"But that is enough about me," and Mr Burgoyne raised his head and leaned back in his chair. "You see, I have taken a friend's privilege and talked with freedom about myself, and now I want to talk of *you*."

Then Mr Burgoyne asked Stone about his health. How did he find himself now—after these quiet monotonous years?

"Strong and well, Stone? What does George Wren say of you now?"

"Oh, I am well enough, sir. Wren says I am absolutely fit—able to do a lot more work than you ever give me, sir," and Stone laughed cheerfully.

"But, Stone—in these last months I have fancied that your nerves were a little out of order—or that you were worried about something—how shall I put it? That the sword was uneasy in the scabbard."

"You don't give me enough to do, sir. If I worked harder, my nerves wouldn't worry me."

"They *have* worried you?"

"Yes, sir," said Stone reluctantly. "I think they have—but all that is over. I feel thoroughly right again."

"You have had no private trouble—no secret cause for care?"

"No."

"But you think now and then of other places than Cliff Lodge? You think of life and love—of a man's natural hopes. Then the blood turns sour from dull philosophy, eh, Stone?" and Mr Burgoyne chuckled softly. "Then the nerves are fiddle-strings for awkward hands to scrape on. Then the sword begins to wear the scabbard, Stone. That's how you feel, Stone, eh?"

Mr Stone's pale face had flushed.

"I am thoroughly happy here, sir."

"Stone, I don't believe a word of it," and Mr Burgoyne laughed contentedly. "We old fellows can use our eyes, now and then, as well as George Wren and all you young fellows. I have seen it again and again—in these last months. You're often far from happy."

"I assure you, sir, that is not so, now."

"Isn't it?" and the clear blue eyes were full and steady on Mr Stone's changing face. "Suppose I say that I am so sure of it that I think you ought to go away, that you must leave us to our own devices and go back to the world, back to freedom for a year, two years—say three years, and then if you like, come back; that I will arrange all this

for you; and that I promise you may come back—if you choose—at the end of the three years? Suppose I were to say that I *had* arranged it—found a mission for you if you like—some work as well as play—and you must start to-morrow?"

"I should simply hate to go."

Mr Stone, obviously, was aghast at the idea. His dark eyes turned to his host in questioning wonder.

"What? You don't leap at the chance I am giving you? Now is the time to break your chains—and take your freedom. If they are heavy chains, be wise and let me snap them."

"There are no chains, sir. I—I—"

"Oh yes, Stone, there are chains, I think—and strong ones too; though *I've* not forged them," and Mr Burgoyne chuckled happily. "My boy, I fear they are love-chains. I fear you love Miss Effie."

'Then, very gravely, he told Mr Stone, that if he was sure of his health and sure that he would make her a good husband, he had permission to propose to the young lady whenever he cared to do so.

"I have spoken of myself," said Mr Burgoyne: "to let you read my thought. This is no light thing that I do for you. I think I am not wrong—I *hope* I am not wrong. It is a great—great trust," and with a gesture of his hand he waved away any protestations that might naturally be coming. "I have spoken of myself, and I speak now of myself only. If Effie loves you—if you can win her love—I'll trust her to your care."

Mr Stone had flushed and now he was very pale.

"I—I don't know what to say, sir," he stammered in a low voice. "You—you have completely overwhelmed me."

"Overwhelmed you?"

"If I thought that Effie—if," said Stone, "I dared hope——"

"Well?" and the clear blue eyes were full upon him.

"I think, sir, Effie's husband should be the happiest man in England—I think——"

"Stop," said Mr Burgoyne, with a sudden coldness in his voice. "I'll give you time to think."

And for the second time Mr Stone, at a turning-point in his life, was given a month for quiet thought.

"As I said, this is no light thing, Stone. Take a month and then we'll talk of it again."

And once more Mr Stone protested.

"Sir. Let me speak to her to-morrow."

"No. Not for a month, please. In a month you and I will talk of it again. Meanwhile, we'll keep all this between ourselves," and Mr Burgoyne pushed back his chair and rose from the table. "We'll seek no advice. Not Wren, not anyone"; and as though unconsciously he drew himself to his full height. "You understand, I cannot have it known that I have offered you my niece's hand and you are considering your answer."

Then the two gentlemen joined the two ladies in the drawing-room.

"What *have* you been doing?" asked Mrs Burgoyne. "I thought you were never coming."

"You'd not guess what we've been doing," said Mr Burgoyne jauntily. "We have been *smoking*! Both of us."

"Oh, Richard. How *wicked* of you!"

"Wasn't it? And sly too. But I felt that I really wanted a cigarette," and he went to the sofa by the piano.

Effie at the piano was playing very softly, intently watching her white hands as they moved to and fro. Now, for the first time since the drawing-room door opened, she looked up.

"Don't stop playing, dear," said Mr Burgoyne. "Please don't stop playing. I love it."

For a week, in the bright May weather, the quiet life went on: work in the big room, painting in the summer-house, the daily walks, the daily rests—the old unbroken routine with no word spoken that foreboded change. Then, at the end of a week, young Mr Stone, with a flushing face but with a loosened, resolute tongue, told his employer he could wait no longer.

"Can't wait, eh?" said Mr Burgoyne, and he had a well-

contented smile. “*Won’t* wait, eh? I suppose a month is a mighty long time—for a lover.”

“It would drive me out of my mind—the uncertainty. Sir, may I speak to Effie, now?”

Mr Burgoyne chuckled very happily. All trace of coldness had gone. It seemed that the young man’s impatience was a welcome phenomenon—a manifestation that his employer had been looking for.

“Upon my word, Stone, you take a high tone with me.”

“I wish, sir, I could tell you what my thoughts have been of you—of all your kindness.”

“Nonsense, Stone. You’ve not wasted thoughts on me. But look here, Stone, really—I don’t see why I should be bullied out of my month. On the other hand, I don’t want to drive you out of your mind. You—you corner me, sir, with your awkward dilemma,” and he rubbed his hands and chuckled.

Then, finally, he told Mr Stone that in all probability he might count on his period of torment being terminated to-morrow.

“Not to-day, Stone. But I think I shall say yes to-morrow. Wait till to-morrow.”

That evening he spoke to his wife of the great secret, from any share in which she had been so long excluded.

“Sybil. I have been plotting and scheming—I have been very sly—but I could not tell you, till now.”

“What is it, Richard?”

“Sybil! Has anything in Jack Stone’s manner lately—for the last few months—aroused your suspicions?”

“Suspicions!”

“Jack Stone is very much in love with Effie.”

“Oh, impossible!”

“Why not? I don’t see how the poor lad could help it. All the world loves Effie.”

“Yes. But she is so young—quite a child.”

“She is nineteen.”

Mrs Burgoyne’s forehead had contracted: she was almost breathless in her wonder at the strange tidings.

"O Richard, I—I can't believe it—You must be mistaken. Besides, it would be so wrong—of both of them—if they had come to a secret understanding—if they have been secretly making love——"

"There has been no love-making."

"Then what leads you to think they are fond of each other?"

"I am speaking of Stone—not of Effie. I questioned him, so I have it from his own lips; and, if Effie consents, I want to make a match of it. . . . Don't you approve?"

"No. I don't like the idea. I don't at all like the idea."

"Why not?"

"I can't understand it. To me—it seems so extraordinary."

"Do you know of any objection?"

"No."

"Do you *feel* that there is some reason why we should not put this trust in Stone?"

"Oh no."

"We must remember," said Mr Burgoyne thoughtfully, "that this is a matter in which your instinct might be of more value than my judgment."

The wonder of it banished sleep. Hour after hour Sybil Burgoyne, with open eyes, lay thinking of it. Sitting by her husband's bedside while she read aloud without following what she read, she had found the thing unintelligible, inconceivable. Now, alone in the silence and the darkness of her own room, she found it even more wonderful. As she bade good-night to her husband, he had told her to think about it. If she approved, this thing would make him very happy.

After all, why not?

Already a faint light was stealing into the silent room: the dawn was breaking, and still she lay sleepless. Word by word she brought back to her memory all that Stone had said to her, when they stood above the hollow and looked down into the shadowy depths where lovers walked with linked arms. He was miserable; he was passing through a phase; he was torn by fierce longings, crushed by the weight

of vain regrets. Sometimes, in his torment, he knew what the monks had felt. And she had shivered and turned cold while she listened. At his words, that old thought of the sadness of all life had come to her; her heart had welled in a flood of pity—a yearning regret because he said that he suffered. In her deep surprise had lain a deeper pain. There was pain in the thought that he should be unhappy amidst all their happiness—a mystery of hidden sadness walking where all their peaceful little world seemed bright and gay. But was this—after all—the secret explanation? He was already in love with Effie—or on the point of falling in love? All the wild revolt, that struggle of the intellect and the senses, meant, in plain terms, only this: he was an ordinary susceptible young man who could not live in the same house with a young girl and escape falling in love with her. Well, if it made him happy, after all, why not?

But Effie? Here, indeed, was another fireside mystery. Here was perhaps the true base of all the wonder. Mystery of mysteries: that a child, a happy, innocent, careless child should, by mere process of normal growth, slowly, imperceptibly accumulate force until, from a pretty household ornament, she became an overwhelming power to shake, to subjugate, completely to enthrall a man's whole nature. With white collars, new ribbons, a changed mode of doing her pretty hair, with a laugh, a flush, or a shake of the head, Effie had worked this great wonder. Unconscious of her power, carelessly, easily, she had used her laughing spell, and at once the pale student, the searcher after noble truths, the dreamer of noble dreams lay writhing at her feet, a slave. Most wonderful!

But if Effie—if dear little Effie loved him, or would come to love him, why not? If she could make him happy—and now it no longer seemed impossible—why not? If this way, as her husband seemed to think, there lay happiness for both of them, why not?

In the morning Mrs Burgoyne told her husband that she approved of his scheme.

"I have thought of it a lot, and really I think it will be a very good thing—if Effie consents. And she will—I am sure. If she does not care for him—in that way—now, she will directly."

Mr Burgoyne was radiant.

"My best of wise Sybils! And this is not merely to please me? It is your own mind? You are certain that there is nothing—instinct, feeling, vague thoughts or doubts that you could not perhaps put into words—which whispers a warning?"

"Oh no."

"Nothing that seems to tell you that your first feeling should not be changed—that we should not thus trust him?"

"Oh no. Really it was only my surprise—at first. I had never thought of it—was quite unprepared. But now the shock of novelty is over—and I have had time to think of it—well, it seems most natural. Just what one should really have expected would naturally happen."

"Yes. That is what I thought. Most natural—almost inevitable," and Mr Burgoyne laughed gaily.

In the afternoon, Mr Stone took Effie for a stroll along the cliff.

Sybil Burgoyne, sitting with her husband in the garden beneath the cool shade of the dark ilex, watched the young couple pass in the sunlight by the long border of bright flowers. It was a heavy, drowsy afternoon and the birds were silent; but Effie's laugh made music as they passed among the flowers, and again, faintly and sweetly, as they disappeared beneath the branches of the fruit-trees near the summer-house and the cliff door. Mr Burgoyne glanced at his wife, and there was shrewd intelligence in his eyes, and a well-contented smile on his lips. No one could doubt what was about to happen, or what would be discussed on the other side of the green door. The ardent young suitor had received permission to open his suit. He would not be slow in availing himself of this licence.

They were gone for a long time. Mr Burgoyne was reading

to himself and scribbling marginal notes in the cumbrous report of a recent Royal Commission. Sybil Burgoyne, leaning back in her comfortable wicker chair, with an open book on her knees, looked out into the sunlight as from a shadowy tent formed for her by the dark ilex, and watched the butterflies or listened to the bees as they hovered here and there above the empty path by the long border.

Then, just when the maids were bringing out the tea-tables, the young people returned. Young Mr Stone, seating himself and putting his straw hat on the ground, bore a certain air of constraint and self-consciousness—as when, years ago, he was wearing his fashionable new suit. But Effie's eyes were like stars, as shyly she kissed her uncle and then kissed her aunt. A happy child—very sweet in her shyly proud triumph.

Thus, Mr Burgoyne—without blundering, without betraying her secret—smoothed the way that should lead to his niece's happiness. Effie, formally wooed, had consented to give her hand to the man who had won her heart. Soon all Whitebridge would have heard of the engagement up at Cliff Lodge.

Mr Burgoyne, after busily scribbling pencil notes, despatched the manuscript to London. This was his sketch or outline of a marriage settlement, and he begged his solicitor carefully to consider the matter, and at his leisure to prepare a draft, which the client, in his turn, would consider. But about this there need be no hurry. It would be a long time before the deed would be ripe for engrossing. The engagement would be a long one. Meanwhile, however—in fact, at once—Mr Burgoyne desired to add to, and modify the terms of his will. Mr Burgoyne suggested a codicil, or, if his legal adviser preferred it, a new will. Here were the pencil notes: it was for the London solicitor to give them proper form.

In three or four days a partner of the London firm was seated at Mr Burgoyne's dining-table, with papers spread on the green baize. All was in order. The firm had preferred a new will to another codicil; and here was the draft, most accurately setting forth the client's wishes—the slight modification with

regard to Mr John Stone, the considerable addition with regard to Mrs Burgoyne, the further names of servants, etc. But the firm had decided to send down a partner to run through the draft with the client : to make quite sure, to reassure themselves that they had not garbled any of these numerous names . . . and to "advert again to the inquiry contained in our letter of the 20th."

"Quite so," said the solicitor, beginning to refold his papers. "It is your wish that all property specified should pass to Mrs Burgoyne absolutely ?"

"Absolutely," said Mr Burgoyne.

"Without conditions of any sort—as, for instance, making her disposing power in any way contingent on her remaining a widow ?"

"Oh no," and Mr Burgoyne smiled. "My wife would not marry again—and I am not going to die. I am not going to die until my work is done."

XII

ALL Whitebridge knew now. The engagement was established. Published by many tongues it had not been denied.

At the Lodge there was a little dinner of fête—Mr and Mrs Townley, Dr Wren of course, Effie and her betrothed sitting side by side—with all the white flowers from the greenhouses, a drinking of healths, champagne corks popping—really a *feu de joie* from the man in the hall, loyally determined that on this night of nights in Cliff Lodge no guest, be he groomsman or gardener, shall go short of fizzy wine. Mary was brushing crumbs and about to set on the dessert, when with a gesture the vicar drove her from the table. It had been observed by all, that the vicar was glancing at the backs of three envelopes which he had brought from his pocket and furtively dropped into his lap. No moment could have been more inopportune, because, in this transitional stage between puddings and dessert, there was not a wine-glass on the board ; but the vicar could wait no longer.

“ My dear children,” and Mr Townley rose in his place.

With quick intuition, Mary understood. Glasses flashed and tinkled as she and Sarah hustled back to the table. Glasses were charged as, with increasing effect, the vicar repeated his phrase for the third time :

“ My dear children. The few words I will say have been mutely spoken in the hearts of all here to-night.”

It was a kindly little speech. Wren thought the vicar could have done it sitting down, but he could not have done it. Unjustly would it have been said, that the vicar on this occasion used his pulpit voice. His manner and tone were no more professional than when, standing on the chancel steps, he sketched quite informally the programme of services, etc., in

the ensuing three weeks, or reminded his congregation of the approaching festival of the church club. It was a kind little speech and kindness shone in the vicar's eyes. It was kind to let bygones be bygones and to speak of Stone as a dear child—and not as a very naughty and disheartening truant. Not by half frown, pointing finger, or sudden emphasis, did he hint to Stone that he must now turn over a new leaf. But just at the end, after a few words that he devoted to praise of their host, when he gave his kindly little blessing, he dropped out Stone altogether.

"I will only say of our good host"—and Mr Townley curiously, but no doubt unconsciously, sounded an echo of something that Mr Burgoyne had once said to him—"that, if our thoughts on many matters are as the poles asunder, we are united in the bonds of genuine friendship and I hope he will ever regard me as his friend. . . . And now, my dear Effie—my dear child—I say God bless you."

And that was what they said in the hall ; in the pantry ; in the far-off kitchen. The kindly sentiment passed from lips to lips as the foaming wine passed from hand to hand, till, last of all, the far-off kitchen-maid, raising her glass, said it with a sudden catch in her breath : "Miss Effie ! God bless her."

They all loved Effie.

After dinner there was music—only a little music. The good vicar was not partial to concerts. But Effie played the Irish melodies, because Uncle Richard liked them ; and Mrs Townley played a sprightly gavotte, out of a comic opera that she had heard a long while ago when visiting London with her young friend, because she liked it herself. "Effie," she called from the piano, "does this carry you back ? Will you ever forget that piece ? *How we laughed !*" Then, although no one had said encore, she played the gavotte again—because she liked it so much. Then there was pleasant conversation.

Dr Wren, beaming amiably on a sofa in the strong light of an unusual number of candles, gallantly permitted Mrs Townley, when she had taken the other half of the sofa and was fanning herself after the gavotte, to ask him many and searching

questions on medical subjects. Perhaps the good lady, without in any way setting up her poor little opinion against his, wished to lead him to a consideration of the advisability of giving any young engaged girl change of scene in the care of some trustworthy guardian. But, somehow, this point was never reached. Mrs Townley, smiling at Dr Wren over her moving fan, mentioned the name of Miss Granger and soon produced upon Dr Wren's face a glow redder than that caused by mere candlelight. Mrs Townley had heard of how, when Dr Wren was suffering from his touch of influenza, Miss Granger—and Mrs Townley had been immensely touched when she heard of it, of how Miss Granger—and Mrs Townley had always admired her: "So *genuine* in all her likes and dislikes, so frank and *open* in her unconventionality," of how Miss Granger—had gone straight to Dr Wren and *nursed* him.

"That's not true," said Dr Wren bluntly. He had ceased to beam and he was quite red.

"*Isn't it?*" said Mrs Townley. "Well! just fancy. *Everybody* said so."

"There was no question of nursing," said Dr Wren with ill-concealed irritation, "because I was never ill."

It was a long time since Dr Wren had been teased about Miss Granger by his friends at the Lodge, and now, obviously, he did not enjoy his teasing.

"Well. To be sure," said Mrs Townley. "*What* a place Whitebridge is for silly talk!"

"It is," said Dr Wren. "And Mrs Townley—I feel sure you have great influence in stopping silly talk or keeping it going. I wish you'd stop people connecting—our names—"

"*Indeed I will,*" said Mrs Townley. "If I can. I'm only so glad to know *what* to say when asked. People *do* ask me things of course—as the wife of the vicar—naturally. And sometimes one really doesn't know *what* to say. But now—after your hint—I *do* know."

"Thank you," said Dr Wren: no longer red, and trying to smile again.

Then, with more conversation and the silver tray with cake-

basket and lemonade carafes glittering and flashing in the candlelight, the evening came to an end : the betrothal celebration was over.

Last to go, Dr Wren in his big overcoat, holding his rough shooting cap in his hand, lingered talking to his host in the hall. They were alone together, and Dr Wren had enjoyed so little talk with the host to-night that it seemed he could not refrain from lingering. Only a few words at dinner—about this problem of malaria and mosquitos and water, and all the work accomplished by these brave Italians ; and then, just when Mr Burgoyne was about to say something important, unseemly interruption from the vicar. Now Dr Wren, lingering, returned to the malaria problem.

"I think," said Dr Wren with enthusiasm, "they have proved their case, sir. From the first they fairly tackled their problem. It seems to me they have narrowed their problem down to a fine point."

Mr Burgoyne replied quite gravely and yet with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Wren. Dr George Wren. There's a problem before *you*, which you'll have to attend to—Miss Granger."

Dr Wren moved uneasily, passing his rough cap from one hand to the other.

"Oh, I don't mean anything in that quarter."

"No," and the great man dropped his voice. "But she does," and his voice had a gentle, tolerant, sympathetic tone that Dr Wren knew well. "I think she means to marry you. I think she'll do it too."

Dr Wren gasped.

"Why not, Wren? She'll make you a very good wife."

"Do you think she will, sir?"

"I feel sure she will—quite a good wife."

But, probably, Dr Wren had really meant to ask whether she could and would marry him whether he wished it or not. Were such things possible?

He walked home very slowly and very thoughtfully, through the summer mystery of the grey night, beneath the eternal

mystery of the white stars. Truly it seemed that his problem was an old one narrowed down to its old fine point. Free-will or predestination? Which? Were men free agents in these matters? Perhaps of one thing only did he feel certain: When Richard Burgoyne, the author of *Bases and Beginnings*, saw a thing coming, it generally came.

After the betrothal dinner there was an end of all excitement. The happy pair were duly licensed lovers; their future happiness was assured; they might let life resume its normal jog-trot course—except in this: that for them walking hand-in-hand, life might seem a happy dream, and they might give themselves to dream delights without a fear that the soft dream could have a rude awakening.

Mr Burgoyne, settling down again into his interrupted work, gave forth words of law.

There was to be no suggestion of hurry. There must be no talk of marriage until Effie should be well over twenty. A really convenient time, for the wedding would of course be between books. If they could wait—and Effie was so young that they ought to be able to wait—the truly appropriate time for the marriage ceremony would be when the *Mechanism of Thought* was completed. Thus Mr Burgoyne gave law, and as law, Mr Stone accepted the words. They would willingly wait: indeed it was his desire to wait for the completion of the *Mechanism*.

But, said Mr Burgoyne, when the marriage comes, it must be a real marriage. Effie must have a home of her own, be mistress of her own house, her own life—no half measures. Stone had assumed, without question—that he and his bride would continue to live at the Lodge. He seemed to assume that this arrangement would please: in fact that here lay the causes that had rendered him a possible, a welcome suitor. Mr Burgoyne need not lose his loved niece, might still retain his useful secretary. All might go on as before: no break in the steady labour of the gliding days, no break in the narrow

circle of the home—only a husband and wife to sit at the dinner-table after the day's work instead of two old friends, as hitherto. But Mr Burgoyne, giving law, said: "No, certainly not."

"Oh no, Stone, that would never do. You must think of other things than work. That would never do. You must forget work—the sooner the better, Stone—you are working too hard now. You have duties outside this room now. You must forget me and my dull toil—the sooner the better."

Talking to the young man, when they chanced to be alone in the workroom, the old man showed a great pleasure in sketching Effie's future and a great tenderness as, philosophically, he dwelt on the trifles that make for happiness. He spoke always deprecatingly—almost with deference, as to one who must listen from courtesy and kindly feeling and not from sense of duty. It was as in many passages in his books, when he seems to be saying to the reader: "I do not pretend to teach you. These are only hints—speculations to stimulate your own thought—with perhaps here and there a broad principle which I have found useful and which may perhaps be useful to you."

"You know, Stone," and he would lay down his pencil or close his note-book. "When I spoke of a *house*, what I really meant was a flat. Yes. One of these pretty little flats—self-contained, don't they call it? But you know all about it, Stone—much better than I do. Just the thing for young couples, eh? A cosy little *flat*—a pretty little nest for two love-birds."

And he would fold his hands and chuckle as though in quiet enjoyment of the mental vision.

"With plenty of cupboards. *Cupboards!* That's what ladies like—*cupboards*," and he repeated the word as if with extreme relish.

The important thing was the idea of home, not its size: a real household, but not necessarily a large house. Two servants—why more?—all the delight of an establishment for Effie without domestic worry. "It will be a delight to her,

Stone. . . . And no fuss—no blame if she blunders—if accidents occur about the food. You are a philosopher—If the meat be burnt, Stone—a kind word and a smile, eh, Stone? That's how men of our calibre *assert ourselves*, eh, Stone?" And then there came an earnest, almost a pleading tone. "If in early days she looks for that smile and *finds it*, Stone, she'll remember as long as you both live—as long as you both live, Stone—

"And trips to Paris, Stone!" Mr Burgoyne, having re-opened his note-book, closed it with a snap again. "Paris—to show her the palaces. The honeymoon again—as they describe in Mr Hind's novels. Sometimes novels are strangely true to life. I would not say an entire novel—that I would not say. But it has often struck me how these clever novelists without *seeking* Truth seem to tumble into her arms—now and then—as if by accident"; and Mr Burgoyne chuckled.

"Then—if there are no new ties to keep you in England—travel, Stone. Show her our little, turning world. And, Stone, if she thinks the stars are hung as lamps to light you on your way—if Effie likes to think this rolling speck of dust the centre of the universe"—and again his voice was full of tenderness—"I'd let her think it. On my honour, Stone, I think in Effie's case I'd not correct that error—if I were you. In Effie's case I'd let that error stand."

Sybil Burgoyne, talking very little of the future, thought of it much. Small habits had been broken. In the orderly routine of her life—so long continued that habit seemed bound up with nature's laws, inexorable—the smallest break must needs at first bring with it a sense of instability, must needs for the moment shake one with vague dread of changes widening, deepening, linking one with chaos.

This, she told herself, was why at first the engagement had moved her mind to sudden, inexplicable revolt. Surprise and distaste! Why? It was the break in the habit of her thoughts. Without analysing the thought, it had seemed as though she had been told of love-making between a brother and a sister

—something unbelievable and wrong. But such a thought would have been absurd. Beneath the thought fear had been working—fear of the ever-widening circle of change. That was the explanation of the first revolt.

Now, as the little habits broke, she understood. Change tends to restlessness of mind: new thoughts bring others thronging on the new-made tracks. Of a morning, when the work was done, Mr Stone used at once to leave the work-room and, strolling down the garden, join Effie in the summer-house. Before the engagement he used to stay, and he often helped Sybil Burgoyne to set her papers and her desk in order. He was always the last to leave the workroom. Now, too, there were walks with Effie along the cliff, and there was uncertainty if they would punctually return to luncheon. Once or twice they had gone for a picnic luncheon—basket, sketch-book, colour-box carried by Stone, while Effie, as advance guard, spied out the land and sought and found the very best bench or bank for daubing and munching. Such picnics made a strange blank at the luncheon-table at home. Again there was bicycling in the cool of the evening. Mrs Burgoyne had lost her escort for the bicycle. The happy pair always asked her to come too. But that could hardly be. He must act only as Effie's escort now. All these slight changes made the breaks in habit. Such little breaks they were, yet with power to banish sleep.

Without escort, riding faster and farther now that she rode alone, Sybil Burgoyne, with spinning wheels along the flat, or slowly and painfully creeping up the long hills, strove to find in muscular exercise the natural cure for this increasing sleeplessness. It had established itself in all its annoyance, gradually. At first the thing had been nothing at all—a restlessness that broke the nights and marked them off in stages. A waking from one's dreamless sleep and the discomfort of the waking thought—the thought one had forgotten: a struggle with the thought that seems more harassing by night, and then, once more, oblivion. Then, as the trouble deepens, the struggle with the thought before one sleeps at

all: victory over the thought or the complete exhaustion of the beaten ere sleep is possible: night after night a lengthening struggle: the busy brain flashing its restless currents, spending the long hours in its untiring irresistible activity, wearing itself out in its stupid unordered labour, a machine that defies control, throbbing, pumping, flashing—sleeplessness.

Why should she struggle? By night or by day, why should the thought give pain?

It is only the sense of loss. The brightness is going from them: soon the brightness will be gone. From Effie always, and from Stone in a less degree, has come the laughter and the mirth that have made their life so pleasant. These two have held so large a place in her life—and now they are going out of it. They must be all the world to each other: they can admit no others to the circle of all this newly discovered joy.

It seems—as she thinks of it, spinning far and swift upon her wheels—that colour and light have been dimmed in surroundings. The fields are drab; the sky is clouded—even the white cliffs are stained: smoke-stained, dirty, no longer dazzling one's eyes with a white, sunlit, glittering splendour.

At night she sits in her room, reading, and thinks of it. They are going—to be very happy. She thinks of Effie as the active agent. Effie will take him away and make the cliffs glitter for him—make each common scene a sunlit paradise. She will make him laugh at innocent childish jokes—she will make him very happy: with one smile will make him forget all his vain regret, his yearnings and revolts. As she puts her hand in his, he will forget all the world—at a touch.

They will talk of the old life as though already it lay a thousand years behind them. They will speak very kindly of Uncle Richard, of Ingle, of her, of Miss Granger—kindly, but without regret, without the least sadness. Laughter will mingle with their words—even as they speak of the desolate, silent house of thought.

She cannot read and she cannot sleep. Why is there pain

in the thought of it—of the union itself: the happy lover, the thrice happy bride? She lies down in the brief darkness of the warm night and listens for the murmur of the incoming tide as softly it beats upon the shore; and sadness deeper than the night, wider than the sea, rolls in upon her. She gets up again, relights her candles, and reads—stares at the unturned page or reads without understanding. It is all one. The long night must drag through somehow and give her the dull day—in which she can tire herself, with long rides, long walks: anything to win the physical fatigue that kills thought and renders sleep possible. That is her need now—the bodily toil that obliterates mental unrest.

XIII

THINKING of her husband, she thinks of Tyndall's simile—the lighthouse on the cliff from which Truth shines unwaveringly. Doubtless to her husband the little changes caused by this engagement are not perceptible. It makes no difference. The quiet life goes on. The work goes on : the flame is burning bright in the tended lamp.

Thinking of herself, she thinks of Stone's words : "I am passing through a phase. It is nothing at all—nerves." She now is passing through a phase. Perhaps there are no outward changes really. It is all in herself really : a readjustment of ideas, a taking stock of the scattered mental store. At her age such stock-taking—too long delayed—is troublesome. But soon this necessary disturbance—chaotic as one of Effie's tidyings—will be over : peace and order will reign once more. Soon now, she tells herself, the mental flow of life will be again a steady current unruffled as the outward life about her. Then for her too the quiet life, the quiet days will seem unchanged, unchanging.

Mr Stone was an undemonstrative lover. Looking out into the garden when the morning's work was done, she used to watch him, and, watching, used to lose herself in vague wonder. He was going to the summer-house—to his love; but love brought no wings to his footsteps. After the long hours in the workroom he was always eager for his cigarette, and now outside the window he stopped to light the cigarette, to blow the quickly fading clouds ere he sauntered slowly down the garden. Yet Effie would let him smoke in her sunlit bower. He might have hastened to her, and postponed his cloud-making till they sat side by side and she could strike the match and nestle in the cloud with him.

He was undemonstrative—taking all his bliss soberly. All the world might watch him and while they watched their eyes should see no vulgar lapse, no outrage on good taste: the half caress, the hand detained, the marks of love with which such vulgar lovers as the tourist horde are apt to shock refined intelligence. Of an afternoon he would lounge in a wicker chair, fanned by the gentle breeze, basking in the kindly sun-bath, listening while Effie prattled her own thoughts or with even cadence read him the thoughts of others from the book that he seemed too idle to read to himself.

Yet he was not idle—tired perhaps by too much work. Observing him day by day, Sybil Burgoyne saw that he was working harder and harder. Unmindful of his employer's kind admonition—as if perhaps driven by the loyal desire to lighten future labours in the room when he was gone from it for ever—Mr Stone was certainly working harder than he had ever worked.

In garden or summer-house, Effie seemed always content—with quiet happiness shining from her eyes and love sounding deep and bell-like in her voice. When, reading, she found the loved one dozed, she read on: when he slept, she closed the book and watched him sleeping. And the smile upon her lips was as a mother's smile. The sleeper was her child, her sun and moon, her universe. Sometimes, moving softly, never waking him, she made some rearrangement of a cushion, brought her own chair nearer as a screen, or held a parasol in a new position—in fear lest the wicker-work should gall him, the wind chill him, or the sun burn him. Watching him too, Sybil Burgoyne would observe Effie's motherly, proprietorial care, and vaguely wonder. He was Effie's property awake or asleep, and doubtless by such little exercises of proprietorial right the girl reminded herself of her great happiness. Doubtless she could thus make the inward river of joy run stronger and deeper—a stream to float her on to the moment when the man should wake and give her the reward of patience: a sleepy mile. Always the smile seemed sufficient for Effie—all-sufficient.

Mrs Burgoyne herself was working harder than of old. Watching Stone she seemed unconsciously to have taken something of his rage for work. Indeed it was more natural that she, as the assistant who was to remain, should feel such ardour than that it should be felt by him, the assistant who was going. After the marriage Mrs Burgoyne would again become chief aid to the master worker. It would be well if, while Stone was still with them, she could so prepare herself as nearly to fill his place. Wholly to fill it she could not hope. No one could ever be what Stone had been to Richard Burgoyne. But she might at least, while there yet was time, perfect herself in Stone-taught methods, learn all of Stone's great arts that she could hope to hold.

"I want you to tell me all you can. I want my husband to suffer as little as is possible when he loses you."

"Suffer? He'll never miss me—except in his kindness of heart. In his work he'll never miss me. No one can help him."

"It is absurd to say that."

"I mean that one person can help him just as well as another. It is nothing at all that he requires—purely mechanical aid. Anyone—the first man out of the street—could do all that I have done here."

"That is absurd," said Mrs Burgoyne. She had spoken eagerly, but now her voice was dry and cold, as of one who has asked a favour and been unexpectedly rebuffed. "Of course you know that you have been invaluable to my husband. I had no intention of speaking of that—of paying you compliments. Why should I? You are to be one of the family. I asked you to do something that would be useful to the head of the family."

"Of course I'll tell you everything I can."

Then day by day as they worked, Mr Stone acted as tutor to Mrs Burgoyne, preparing her to stand alone in the future, when the tutor would be far away.

On her lonely bicycle rides, resolutely as she set herself to climb the long hills, she set herself to think of the work itself, the real work, her husband's work. How little she

knew of it, how little she understood it. She had read the books—parts of the books again and again, with enjoyment, with wonder, but without true understanding. Only as he treated of common knowledge, when he dealt with the work of others, could she follow the thread. But so soon as he passed from the common ground and led one to his own thought-realm, she was lost: helpless, groping blindfold, unable to go forward, unable even to retrace her steps. From the real work, the working of the master thought, she was as completely shut out as Mr Ingle, or the vicar, or any foolish Whitebridge matron who looked only for the thought in the public esteem it brought the thinker, who only strove to measure the thought by “the length of the pieces” in the public newspapers. She might live in the lighthouse, might help to guard the flame, but the message of the light was not for her.

That was what Stone had meant when he spoke of mechanical aid being the only aid that could be given—when he said that a man out of the street could give it. Yet never till now had she realised with any sense of pain the impassable spaces, as between this world and a fixed star, that stretched between her and her husband.

Once—for the first time in her life—she asked him to tell her something of the work in hand, to explain exactly what he was doing at the moment. She knew from the time-table what point he had reached in the *Mechanism*, but she wished he would tell her how the *Mechanism* was really shaping itself. Was he himself satisfied? Had any unexpected difficulties arisen? Was the block on which he was now engaged the one he had told Stone would be easy-going? What was he writing this morning? As she asked her questions she felt that she might have been one of the troublesome pressmen from London; but, like them, she persisted in asking the questions.

Mr Burgoyne seemed to experience difficulty in replying. He answered hesitatingly, vaguely—eking out the vague words with vague gestures.

"Well—my dear Sybil. . . . No, my dear Sybil, I am not yet in smooth water. I am muddling along. Yes. I am muddling along—perhaps as steadily as I ought to expect."

"You are ahead of the time-table?"

"In a sense—Sybil. But—only, I fear, in a sense."

Then he stopped—they were strolling in the garden—and looked at her thoughtfully, while he seemed to make an effort in order to bring his mind to bear upon the subject they were discussing.

"Let me see, Sybil. Yes. This is exactly where I stand."

Then in a few direct words he told her that, muddling onward, he had left behind him a very ugly incomplete section. Those thought areas that—after investigation and comparing of the maps made by all recent explorers—were finally to be mapped by him, that should have been mapped, but had *not* been mapped! He had done this chapter only in the rough—most incompletely; but eager to get forward, longing to reach his speculative sections, he had passed on. Later, but soon now, he must come back again and seriously wrestle with this chapter. How much time might be required he could not say.

"That is where I stand, Sybil dear. It is good of you to care to know."

This was how he answered her—as a grown man answers a child: telling the child what a child can understand and no more. How else could he answer her?

Alone, she thought of it—the illimitable space that stretched between them. What to her was mystery was the obvious to him, what to him might seem matter for thought would be to her unthinkable. That which made him greater than all other lights was his power of linking, of binding into one, objective and subjective phenomena. That was the power that lifted him above the rest—all the wide world admitted it now. The nations bowed to him because of it—but to her it was unthinkable. So surely as he drew you to it in his books, he made your head ache.

Sitting now, solitary and motionless, on a bench beneath

the flint wall, she tries to think of it. Dimly she understands that to him the thing and the thought behind the thing, the thing and the outward manifestation, are all one, but not to her. But then, this power should show itself in his common life? And it does. She has felt it, without understanding it, often. His perception is different from ours. The thing and the thought behind the thing are truly one. So that often, when he speaks of an occurrence, he surprises one by alluding to objective when you would expect subjective phenomena, or *vice versa*. As when he speaks of a gesture instead of an emotion—vacillating hands for mental distress; or, conversely, broken thoughts for ungainly, blundering action. Stone has told her of this—has called her attention to instances of it—again and again. Stone can estimate, if not measure, the space between the fixed star and ourselves. That is what Stone has meant to convey—no sneer or unkind thought in it, but a simple fact: we cannot hope to help him.

Alone, upon the last of the public benches, beneath the flint wall of the garden, she thinks of it. High above land and sea, looking out across the golden plain of water, she thinks of it. The sun is sinking; it is the pleasant evening hour when gentle breezes begin to creep along the cliff-top; the grass slopes and the cliff-path are trodden now by none but lovers. Two and two they pass slowly: a man and a girl with linked arms, then another pair, another and another, whispering as they pass in the golden evening light, linked so close that they seem to change into one black form as they pass away from her towards the setting sun—as they whisper and glide away, seeking the friendly veils of the falling dusk.

Sadly she broods on the mechanism of thought, on the framework on life, of life itself as she has known it, subjectively. She herself has lived her life—her long, long life—in the thought-world—in the shadowland of thought. That is all the days can ever give her now—thought.

Her father and his friends—all those lesser toiling men as

far off as herself from the true heights, the soaring sweep of Richard Burgoyne's thought—what were they really? Shadows moving, then fading, in shadowland—the grey thought-world where battles are fought on a printed page, where blows are dealt with words only, where love and life are only found in tables of statistics. Suddenly scorn—for a moment, bitter scorn—came as she thought of her father and the others: those grey shadows that surrounded her, that held her from true life when she was young.

The grey old father was fond of her, loved her mother; but how tame, how faint such a love as that must be. His blood only glowed when he tapped some grey rock with his geological hammer; his pulse beat fast perhaps when he held a celt in his bony hands; his eyes no doubt glittered when in the facets of some lump of stone he recognised the agency of fire, and proved to his own satisfaction that the stone had been shaped by men who lived and died a million years ago.

She could remember him returning to the modest home flushed and still trembling from excitement after some great night—lecture, debate, or specially convened meeting of one of his learned associations. She could hear the weak voice rise almost to a squeak as he recounted his triumph to the patient admiring wife: “‘That is not what *I* think.’ I said it very quietly, but the effect was electrical. ‘*I* think,’ I added, ‘exactly the reverse.’ There was a roar of applause”—shadowland. Shadowland!

Then what they said in their books—these grey shadows speaking of life! Scorn filled her as she thought of it. Love in curves—represented by a diagram, with its force expressed in decimals! Unbidden, there came to her memory scraps of her early reading—little, incongruous, disconnected fragments of many text-books which she had studied as a girl, with all the ardour and delight a girl can bring to what is new and strange. Memory gave her not the words themselves but just the turn and manner of such words.

“Sexual love undoubtedly must here be taken into consideration as an agent of destruction. No one can doubt

that all animals when acting under the stimulus of this passion will habitually accept risks and face dangers that otherwise would be avoided." That was the sort of thing they said of *love*. "The parental instinct would have its retardative effect. Offspring would perish but for the parent's affectionate care." That was what they had to say of hearth and home.

Then, more widely, more generally—but the same thing—year after year—in the other books of shadows looming larger, calling themselves philosophers. With a throb of scorn, as memory worked, she supplied the empty words. "The nervous energy is increased by happiness, lowered by such emotions as grief, shame, remorse. . . . The supply of blood is also accelerated or checked. . . . Thus, a young girl awaiting the approach of her sweetheart will exhibit a heightened and fuller action of lungs, heart, and indeed of the whole vascular mechanism. . . . Again, the successful lover, with his mistress in his arms, experiences a diffused, voluminous, pleasurable sense. That we term a *massy* sensation. On the other hand, the prick of a pin, the sharp tinkle of a bell, etc., etc., may all be grouped as *acute* sensations." Shadowland.

And higher still—the men like Spencer? "It is, probably, in the completeness and multiplicity of such sensations that the completest mental life is also reached." That was the sort of thing Spencer used to say—a shadow himself, speaking to other shadows.

And higher still than Spencer—above the grey vault that like a shadowy dome shut in the little world of thought—the one who has soared alone? Is he too but a shadow? The king of the shadows, but still a shadow? No. Scorn dies, doubt fades, nothing but sadness remains as she thinks of him.

Thinking of him only, desperately holding her thought on him alone, she sits with her chin upon her hands and looks far out across the placid sea. And, again, an infinite flood of sadness rolls in towards her.

In the glorious summer weather each train discharged a

burden of noisy tourists; all day the pier, the little streets were full of noisy life: for peace one must ride fast and far. Even in the open country one came on sudden noise, on shouting men and laughing girls—the white dust flying from the chalk road as a *char-à-bancs* clatters down a hill, or steam rising from the horses as they toil up the long slope, while men and girls trudge after, picking poppies and cornflowers, looking for untimely blackberries, blowing toy trumpets, throwing hats over hedges—a happy Cockney band to make a wide world hideous.

Nearly always, when Effie and Mr Stone used their bicycles, they asked Mrs Burgoyne to accompany them. Once, especially, Effie pressed her to go with them.

“Auntie Sybil, I do wish you would come.”

“No thank you.”

“Why not? You know, we shall love to have you with us—and it is so horrid to think of you going all by yourself.”

Mrs Burgoyne laughed.

“Is it? I don’t find it in the least horrid—being by myself. . . . No, I can’t come, really. You—you would stay out too long for me.”

“We will go just where you like,” said Effie, “and come back just when you like. We don’t want to stay out long, do we, Jack?”

“No thank you,” said Mrs Burgoyne. “I am not going out at all this afternoon.”

Then she watched the happy pair glide away—Mr Stone in front, looking back to assure himself that Effie followed safely: a good and watchful escort now, as he had always been when taking care of her instead of Effie.

But Mr Burgoyne did not allow her to stay at home all that afternoon. After tea she rode away, fast and far. The happy pair had not returned, and after tea in the garden she had felt a restless longing for movement and for air that made her grateful to her husband when he urged her to be gone.

Many miles from home, on the other side of the village

of Slanes, she left the white chalk road. Pushing her bicycle, she passed through an open gate and along a field track towards a little wood of beeches that lay hidden from the sea-winds in a fold of the downs. It was the first time that she had dismounted since she started from the Lodge. She was hot; her mouth was dry; her back ached; her legs ached, and her hands were shaking after the prolonged strain. On a dry and crumbling bank beneath moss-grown rails that guarded the wood, she sat down to rest and to think. Muscular fatigue had not dissipated thought. Riding or resting, the whirl of thought went on.

Spreading downward from the deep ruts of the cart track, the ripening corn stretched—field after field of it—down to the green meadows of the valley. Unlike the valley on the home side of the downs, this had no river winding to the sea, but it was lined by a network of tiny streams, natural and artificial, full of dykes and bridges, a green and marshy flat till low chalk cliffs broke it sharply and again the cornfields rose. Upon the farther hills there were more windmills, and beyond these one could just make out the towers of Bevis Castle, dull and faint in the haze that hid the sea. Far and near the light seemed dull to-day—a cloudless but hazy sky that robbed the hills and fields of brightness and of life.

Resting, she thought of her own dull pain: the heavy sense of loss that had taken all the colour from her life. And to-day, for the first time, she analysed the thought itself in which the pain lay throbbing. Whence had it come—to her who had never tried to snatch the common joys of life—the things that make the colour—to her who had been so well content with drab monotony?

Suddenly she bursts into tears—passionate sobbing that seems to burn her throat—a child's passionate revolt against injustice. She has never lived. It is the sight, the thought of Effie and her love that have shaken her. Acted out before her eyes, here is all that she has missed—lost without sense of loss—unthought of till now.

Sobbing and writhing—with burning throat and bursting

lungs—she thinks of herself now: boldly, mercilessly forcing herself to read the message of her almost intolerable pain. This has been the secret of her sense of youth—the consciousness of youth as something eternal that the years cannot touch—the unbroken sense of youth that year by year has moved her with surprise when rarely she pondered on it. She has not lived. Emotionally she has not lived at all. A child who has not matured. Outwardly a woman, inwardly incomplete, immature, a child still. A china figure—soft still—unhardened by the fire: safe while it stands untouched, then to be broken by a breath of wind—That has been her story.

What was it that he said?

The nuns never suffered as the monks suffered. You women have learnt your lesson. You *can* beat down such yearnings. The nuns never suffered. That was what he meant—they could walk through the cloister to the grave without awaking.

Writhing and sobbing, she thinks of it. The nuns never suffered: never felt their loss. See—in a shadowy cell, one of our sisters in Christ writhing on a granite floor, tearing her veil, clenching hands till the red blood marks the stone, beating her forehead on the stone, trying to obliterate thought by death. And above her stands a shadowy abbess, our frail and white Mother Superior, watching with practised eyes, speaking with a practised voice to shuddering sisters round the stone walls. “It is nothing. It is only a phase. She will pass through it. Our master, the devil, is fighting for her,” and the bloodless lips curl in a contemptuous smile. “But he shall not get her. Come. Lift her up, bind her limbs, bind her hands. She is passing through a phase. It has been too long delayed. I have looked for it long ago. Come, bind her fast. Sister Sybil is passing through a phase.”

She can hear wise sisters whisper as they listen in the darkness and catch through locked doors, through stone walls, the moans of agony of Sister Sybil writhing in her bonds. “It is nothing. It is the old war of mind and body. Our master

the devil has no hand in it. It is the last base revolt of the flesh. Soon the battle will be won."

That was what happened : that was how the nuns suffered. Soon the blood became stagnant for ever ; nerves, becoming atrophied, ceased to respond when Nature sought to set her message flashing ; peace, perfect peace, sank into the heart : the battle was won. Our sister, never a deep sleeper, can suffer now only in dreams. Sleeplessness has lost its terror : stone beneath our knees and moving beads between our fingers serve to calm the long night hours. Carrying a load of wood one day through the walled copse, our sister kneels by the brook and looks at herself in the running water. The smooth dark tresses on either temple are streaked with coarse grey hair ; there is no light in the sunken eyes ; and the bloodless lips have, stamped upon them, a meaningless passionless convent smile. Our sister has learnt her lesson.

XIV

MRS TOWNLEY, the wife of the vicar, had made her point good after all. Or, rather, it seemed that blind Chance, lifting the bandage for a peep, had selected from the storehouse of the unexpected such events as might help Mrs Townley. She and Effie were going to London for a fortnight.

Edith, the younger of the two Miss Broomhalls, was to be married in September and she desired her old friend Effie to stand among the bridesmaids in her train. Miss Edith, writing in her frank and sprawling girlish hand, explained that it was so long since she had seen Effie that at first, when choosing bridesmaids, she had not thought of Effie; but now one of the chosen maids had backed out, or been withdrawn by her parents for continental travel, and Edith had soon thought of Effie as a substitute. Effie, for her part, was not at first disposed to accept this invitation either as a high compliment or a deep mark of regard.

But then Edith, sprawling and dashing and underlining at great length, used arguments that ultimately prevailed. "I do want you particularly to say yes. Now, my dear Effie, do say it because it will make me so happy to know you will be there. I can assure you that I would do the same for you like a bird only it will not be possible because I shall be Mrs before the time so cannot be for you. You know I am really fond of you and do not think the time counts in that. Of course I have not seen you much—that time at your house and the two times at Bevis. But for all that I do feel you are one of my best friends. It is not as if I was Jack, because I know that you and Jack were never quite the same as you and I were. Do say yes and then I will write *fully* about the dresses."

Then the matter was discussed at Cliff Lodge. After this

urgent appeal, Effie did not like to refuse: yet Effie did not wish to leave the Lodge. Then Mrs Townley heard of it, and as an old and tried friend ventured for once to speak authoritatively. Effie *must* go. There were a thousand reasons why Effie must not hesitate a moment; but there was one reason of paramount importance: Effie had never yet been a bridesmaid and soon her chance would be gone for ever. No girl's life could be considered complete without this experience. She might not herself feel it now, but many years hence she would feel that in the past there had been this great thing wanting. She must be guided by those older and wiser than herself—those to whom the flying years had brought the wisdom. If there were difficulties, Mrs Townley would freely do all in her power to smash through such obstacles. If, for instance, Mrs Burgoyne could not go, Mrs Townley would conduct and supervise the journey. If Lord Frodsham's house in Upper Grosvenor Street were full of bridesmaids, if for any reason it would not be convenient for Effie to be there entertained, Mrs Townley would remain with her in London. Mrs Townley would carry the thing right through, from the Lodge, back to the Lodge. Rather than Effie should be disappointed, Mrs Townley would do for friendship's sake what she had never done before. She would turn her back on the Harvest Festival, would leave the festival to take care of itself while she took care of Effie.

Miss Edith Broomhall, sprawling in rapture on receipt of Effie's letter of consent, had much to say about the dresses.

They were to be very, very pretty. The hats were to have immense streamers of an appropriate colour; and these, with a new art carried round under the chin, were to be tied in a novel bow not far from the left ear. And in the heart of the bows were to be fixed certain brooches—the gift of the bridegroom. These were to be *secrets*, till the day. "Really," said Edith, "they are secrets, or I would tell you. But this I can say, I have seen them, and I *think* you will like them."

Edith had also much to say about the chain of odd circumstances that had bound her to the month of September as the

only possible date for her wedding. To arrange a wedding in London when simply nobody would be in London was a plan that appeared to call for explanation. "I do not wonder that Mr and Mrs Burgoyne refuse because really all grandfather's best friends are refusing. They will not come to London at such a time. But I do not much care, so long as the wedding itself is all right. It is the church that really counts, and with the music and the flowers and the soldiers I do think that that will be all right." Thus, after dealing with the dresses, the fine ceremony and the probably meagre subsequent reception at the house, Miss Edie came at last to the man. Her Gerald had just been given his troop—they would line the aisle; her Gerald's regiment was ordered to India; she and her Gerald would sail in October. They *had* to be married in September or there would have been no time for a honeymoon. "He is the greatest dear and is not this rather funny in a way? That mine should prove to be in the cavalry, whereas dear old Jack who did nothing but talk about horse soldiers should ——But I forgot. That is Jack's secret. I must not tell you what her plans are. But she will tell you herself fast enough."

September was a week old: in two days now Effie would be going. Far and near the yellow corn was falling to the knife; the dusty hedges showed dangling yellow stalks where the laden waggons had brushed them; over the brown fields far and near a perfume of harvest hung in the drowsy air.

One afternoon Mrs Burgoyne went to the vicarage to settle with Mrs Townley the day and hour of departure. A letter had come from the London hotel. The hotel manager would hold the rooms in readiness for the visitors. As Mrs Burgoyne stood outside the porch, buttoning her gloves, Mr Stone came strolling round the house from the garden.

"Going for a walk? May I come with you?"

"I am only going to the vicarage—on business."

"I'll walk with you, if I may."

"But aren't you on duty? Where is Effie? Doesn't Effie want you?"

"Effie does not want me. She is interviewing the dressmaker. I am not on duty"; and he walked by her side towards the gate

"Don't you think," said Mrs Burgoyne, "that you ought to go up for this wedding?"

"No. I am sure I oughtn't."

"I don't mean that you should stay all the time. But don't you think you should attend the wedding itself—to put in an appearance?"

"Why should I? They only asked me from a mistaken sense of politeness."

"They asked you because you are engaged to Effie—and don't you think Effie herself will be hurt—well, disappointed at not having you with her?"

Mr Stone laughed.

"Look at me. I believe these are my best clothes. How can I go without a wedding garment? It is five years since I owned a silk hat."

Mrs Burgoyne walked on in silence till they came to the path that, leaving the road, dipped towards the hollow.

"Which way are you going?" he asked. "If you aren't in a hurry, let us go this way—then by the high ground. It's very little farther—if you aren't in a hurry."

"I am in no hurry," said Mrs Burgoyne indifferently. "But I think I'll go the nearest way," and she stopped. "Don't come with me, please. You want a walk. Don't let me spoil it for you. I dare say I shall be half-an-hour with Mrs Townley, and then I mean to come straight home."

"You won't spoil my walk. Do come this way. I'll go with you as far as the vicarage and then go on by myself."

From the hidden paths beneath the trees, sounds of voices came towards them—nursemaids calling, shrill laughter of children at play. On the wooden seats there were lovers, sitting motionless as they passed, stupidly staring into loved eyes, mesmerising themselves by steady scrutiny as they lolled with linked arms—a couple on each bench.

Walking by his side, Sybil Burgoyne talked to him of the future, of his plans for his own and Effie's happiness. When they came to the climbing path she walked ahead in silence, and, throughout the climb till they stood upon the upper terrace, she was thinking of the last time they had come this way—of all that he had said to her.

"My husband thinks you will both enjoy travelling. He was a great traveller when he was young."

By his side again on the level ground she talked again.

"Will you like that—travelling?"

"Yes—I suppose so."

Then she asked him questions, with long pauses between them, as they strolled on.

"Have you thought out where you will live?"

"No."

"It will be in London of course?"

"Yes. I suppose it will be London."

"You will like that?"

"I hate London."

"Do you? . . . Well, you will have all the world open for your choice. I think Effie would be happy anywhere. But I don't think you ought to bury yourself in the country."

Very wisely she advised him of the dulness, the emptiness of country life, and of the many pleasures of the life of towns. He was to be congratulated on having interests of his own: as a man of leisure he would never be a mere idler.

Then suddenly he spoke with vehement impatience.

"Don't go on congratulating me. I don't care where I live—or what I do. The whole thing will be a lifelong mistake."

"Oh, what do you mean?" She stood pale and breathless holding her gloved hand pressed to her side. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand? Don't you know that men make mistakes—get pushed on by circumstances?"

"You—you can't mean you don't really love her?"

He had turned his back, and now he laughed before he turned to her again.

"Why have you made me talk about it?—I ought to be kicked. This is the second time I have said things to you I ought to be ashamed to say to anybody. Forget it. Forget it. I—I didn't sleep last night. I am irritable to-day."

"But it is horrible if it is true."

"It is not true. I am—awfully fond of Effie. But—but I wish she were going to have a worthier husband——"

"If you love her, she will——"

Then again he burst out violently.

"You *will* make me tell you. Well then—it is going to be a damnable mistake. I never thought of it. I swear I'd never thought of it, till *he* spoke to me. He seemed to wish it, and I thought—I don't know what I thought. Then I found out that she cared for me—poor Effie—that she really cared for me, and I thought: why not? So then I said I'd do it——"

Then they walked on side by side, in silence, to the wall of the churchyard.

"Don't think of it. Forget it. I wish I hadn't told you—but never think of it again," and abruptly he left her.

With her hand upon the vicarage gate, she looked round and saw him walking bareheaded, carrying his straw hat in his hand—walking fast across the down.

She came back from her brief interview with Mrs Townley slowly and wearily as if tired by a long walk—as if too tired to think. Twice on the high ground she paused as if to rest, as if studying the familiar scene in vague wonder while she rested. It was the same and yet another scene at which she looked now, drawing long breaths and holding her hand to her side. The colour had returned to her surroundings.

On one of the grass terraces she sat for a little while trying to think of what he had said, but in truth only thinking of the quiet landscape in the sleepy evening light—fields of over-ripe corn and brown fields of stubble—white chalk on a hillside; yellow sands and blue water—the perfume of harvest, and the peace of harvest—and, when slowly she

turned her head, the giant sails of the windmill slowly revolving: to tell her of the invisible force in the midst of the calm.

At night she sank at once into a profound dreamless sleep. It was as if, through the ordeal of an overpowering bodily fatigue, she had found the cure—an absolute oblivion. It was as if, when she closed her eyes, dark curtains fell and she was dragged down into a black sleep-cavern—a thoughtless void, some lesser cave near the vast halls that hold the sleep of death.

XV

IT was Effie's last evening at home before the London visit, and a spirit of brooding silence seemed to hang over the quiet evening meal.

Effie was sad perhaps because to-morrow she was going away from all she loved, and thus could find no light words or laughter. Mr Burgoyne was tired perhaps after unusually long hours in the workroom. He looked at his niece now and then and smiled and asked a few questions, and Effie answered; and then again silence fell: as though some spirit of the silent night had crept with the scent of the flowers through the widely open windows and stifled all their voices.

It had been an oppressive day—hot and heavy, with cloudless sky and glittering sea, and the last of the harvesters and the last of the tourists had drooped and languished as they went about their toil and their pleasure.

Towards the end of the dinner Stone and Mr Burgoyne talked together: at first in a desultory fashion—obviously making conversation—and then with awakened interest. During the last week some belated red cards had arrived from Continental hospitals. These were answers to a flight of questions sent out by Stone a long time ago. The information sought was purely statistical—matter for footnote or appendix when classified and tabulated: number of post-mortem examinations of subjects exhibiting mental derangement and number of cases in which brain degeneration could be plainly traced, and so on and so forth. But with two of the cards correspondents had been good enough to send additional statements, and of these little papers Stone now spoke.

"Yes," said Mr Burgoyne, "it is kind of them to take so much trouble. I would like to go through all they say."

"One case is of loss of memory," said Stone. "Berlin. A mason who fell from a scaffolding——"

As the two men talked, Effie and Sybil Burgoyne seemed to dream. Mr Stone was giving a long description of the mason's case; and Effie, with clasped hands and dreaming eyes, seemed to listen to the voice rather than the words—the voice that she would not hear after to-morrow morning for a long, long fortnight.

"Yes, Stone," said Mr Burgoyne, really interested at last. "You must let me read that. How kind they are to me. What more does he say?"

Sybil Burgoyne listened to the voices—not understanding, not trying to understand, with a sense of unreality, conscious of something dreamlike and vague in the quiet room and of a restless wonder in herself. They were speaking of the mechanism of thought—what else did they ever speak of? They were speaking of the brain itself, of the magic mirror on which the pictures, now shadowy, now bright and clear, are thrown unceasingly, tirelessly, remorselessly while life lasts, till death, with a snap as of a patent lamp roughly extinguished, puts out the magic light and the mirror is black and void. What else did they ever speak of in the house of thought? While she listened to the voices, she was seeing the pictures in the magic mirror—coming unbidden, unbidden changing, fitfully glowing, fitfully dimmed and glowing again: a long white road; a man walking bareheaded; the bank beneath the trees where she had lain and wept—magical, terrible mirror, flashing the past, flashing the future, while life lasts, while light lasts, filling one with restless wonder.

"You know, Stone, if they have lost the exact record of the external injury—in fact, if they have not the whole history of the case, it is all useless, isn't it, Stone? . . . I don't mean for our purposes. From our point of view, it is very interesting and there's an end of it. . . . But we must tackle those cards—after all the trouble you and others have taken—and all the kindness—it would be dreadful to neglect the cards."

As she listened to the voices, she was playing with an empty

wine-glass, twisting and turning it in nervous, restless fingers—playing with the glass as often she had seen Stone play when his thoughts were far away.

"I have been going through them," said Stone, "to-day—with Mrs Burgoyne. We can have them all in order by to-morrow night."

"No hurry, Stone. You work too hard. Any time—but keep me up to the mark. Don't let me shirk the cards—through laziness"; and Mr Burgoyne turned to his wife. "So you are to be card-keeper, Sybil? It is to you I ought to have said that. Don't let me shirk the cards, Sybil dear. . . . Sybil?"

Then Mrs Burgoyne broke her wine-glass—shivered the stem with a spasmodic jerk, and started, as though waking from a dream.

"Oh, how clumsy of me!" And, wondering at her clumsiness, she laughed at her clumsiness.

Effie, startled from her dreaming by the tiny crash of glass, laughed too.

"That's what I've told Jack would happen to him," said Effie, laughing. "Aunt Sybil, you have learnt the bad habit from Jack—and he is more to blame than you are."

"My mind had wandered," said Mrs Burgoyne. "I had no idea I was doing it."

"It is our stupid talk," said Mr Burgoyne, smiling. "I am the one who is to blame—for making your mind wander by my stupid talk."

In the drawing-room, Effie played the piano—the plaintive Irish melodies: the music uncle liked, on this her last night at home for two long, long weeks. Mr Burgoyne, lying on the sofa, listened and murmured thanks and approval and would not doze because it was Effie's last night at home. Stone sat close to the piano, and smiled his thanks each time that the white fingers paused to rest and the kind eyes turned to read his face.

Sybil Burgoyne, sitting by the open window, looked out

into the garden and neither spoke nor moved. How clumsy she had been. Dreamily, while Effie played, she thought of the broken glass, of all the trivial events of the long oppressive day.

It was hot still—a wonderful night for September, with scent of flowers as in June, no breeze from the sea, no sound of the waves : no sound of life outside the lamplit room, as she sat motionless, listening, thinking, wondering, when Effie paused and the music ceased.

"Shall I go on, Aunt Sybil?"

"Yes, please go on playing, Effie."

Stone had moved his chair to the sofa and he and her husband were talking again, and again she listened to the low voices, mingling now with the soft and plaintive music. The cards again ; the stone-mason again ; the mechanism of thought again—what else could they talk of in the quiet house of thought? There was moonlight in the garden—behind the black mass of the ilex, a sheet of silver laid out upon the black lawn ; and moonbeams, piercing their way through the branches, had changed one of the windows of the dark work-room into a silver door with the clematis hanging on either side as a white curtain ; but in front of her was the yellow lamplight from the room, falling bright upon the gravel path and showing green leaves and red flowers upon a black wall of shadow. Looking from the lamplight to the moonlight, and resting her eyes on the shadow-walls, she thought of each hour of the long quiet day, and wondered.

The trouble has been in the air all day—a feeling of unreality. All day she had been unable to concentrate her thoughts. Throughout the morning she blundered at her work—going to him for assistance again and again. And the trouble was in his voice—a hardness, a sort of breathless hurry. When she went back to her desk and presently looked round, his eyes were upon her face. Her eyes drooped and she felt the blood rising to her cheeks. Why? It was as though there is some evil secret between them.

Now, as she rises from her seat by the window and comes to

her husband's side, the trouble fills the air; the sense of unreality is strong upon her. She answers mechanically, hears her voice with wonder at the words—wondering that she has understood what they said to her.

"Yes. I will go and fetch it. . . . Yes, I know where it is—in the drawer—on top of the others."

They want the square envelope with the red card and the written statement from Berlin.

"Thank you, Sybil. It is too bad to trouble you, but I *should* like to see it—and be done with it."

"There is no light in the room. Let me bring a lamp," and Stone rises.

"No thanks," and the trouble sounds in her voice. "I can find it without a light."

She leaves the workroom door open, and the lamplight from the hall streams in to meet the moonlight shining palely through the window. The drawer that holds the cards is below the shelves of books close to the window, in the moonlight: she has light enough and needs no aid. But Stone has followed her—talking, in a dry, hard voice. "That is not the place—we put it. In the upper drawer—I think. You—you won't find it there"; and, as he stands behind her, she hears his fast breathing. Her fingers shake in the drawer and she cannot answer.

"Can't you find it?" And he stoops beside her till his face touches hers.

"Oh, please don't."

It is the feeble, half-whimpering appeal of a child, not the protest of a woman of thirty-three, as he takes her in his arms and kisses her on eyes and forehead. Her head has sunk so that he cannot reach her lips. It seems as if she would sink through his arms to the floor. Then he turns her with her back to the bookshelves and holds her against him.

"Kiss me. Kiss me."

In a breathless whisper he says it—a command rather than an entreaty. And slowly the open, wavering lips turn to his and she obeys him. Her face is as cold as death; she is limp

as a rag ; and, in sudden fear that she is about to faint, he takes her from the wall, and, with one arm round her, draws her away.

"We must go back. You must go back. I'll follow. My darling, I love you so—I love you so."

Then she goes back to the other room—stopping in the hall to look at herself in the mirror above the Lowestoft bowl. Effie is still playing. Her husband, on the sofa, looks up and smiles. Presently Stone comes in with the envelope ; gives the paper to his employer ; then sits in his accustomed place near the piano. Their life goes on. This monstrous betrayal has occurred and the quiet room is unchanged. She is wrapped in flame and the quiet life goes on.

XVI

IT was the awakening—she understood. For a moment she was horror-stricken by the baseness of the fall; then she was lost to everything: without thought except for her love.

Between her and her husband walls of stone had risen—in an hour. And the walls divided life from death: the shadow-world from the real world. She was standing in the sunlight and the sunlight itself was flowing in her veins—the soft fire was flowing from heart to brain, instead of stagnant creeping blood. On the other side of the cold, granite barrier the grey thought-realm stretched limitless—the boundless prison in which as a shadow among shadows she had wandered till now. To think of him meant sadness. Only by an effort, for a moment, could she do it. He, too, was a shadow—had always been a shadow. As for a moment she thought of him, the sunlight was darkened; a shadow moved, and then, receding, faded: that was all.

To his outward form her feelings were unchanged. For the man in the arm-chair, for the kindly grey-haired man who sat scribbling or who stood amongst open books and raised his bowed head to smile at her, she had reverence as of old, gratitude—never fear. Why should she fear him? He cannot touch her; she is in another world than his.

She had been dead—till lips pressed to hers brought her to life. As she thought of it, joy in life filled her throat with song. Effie has gone. He is hers—not Effie's. He is hers. Effie has gone.

That is the good thought—the live thought, not the dead thought—that sends the sunlight coursing through her veins, that sets the nerves to work—to their joyous work—in flashing nature's message through its wide circuits of thrilling joy. Effie has gone. He is hers—not Effie's. In her room of a

morning, brushing her dark hair, she sings to herself—sings little snatches of childish song to her radiant flushing face in the looking-glass—sings her song of glory in life and love. She was dead and she has come to life, and the face in the glass is transfigured, glorified, taking a new and noble dignity to her wondering eyes. Can this be she? Soon she must hide this shining mask, must compose the trembling lips, take the colour from the smooth cheeks, cover her delight with the common mask of the old dead days, lest all who see her read her secret.

All is joy in this early morning hour when, rising from her dreamless sleep, she stands by the open window to welcome another golden day. All is sparkling and glittering in the pure morning light—all is joy. And nature's messages flash through every sense channel, feeding the river of joy till it fills her brain with voluminous content. The perfume of flower and shrub, of ripe fruit, of shorn fields; the sight of the sea, dazzling and tremulous; the sound of the sea, whispering and sighing; the sweet sea-breath that stirs her dark hair; white clouds that move, white birds that wheel in the blue—all is joy.

Then the happy day begins—so like the dead days that are gone for ever, yet now a day of infinite delight. She sits at the breakfast-table and wears her old-time mask: is calm and sedate, quiet and composed; talks to her husband, laughs with her husband, is attentive to his needs, watchful, kind as ever—the peaceful mistress of the peaceful house. She would not have him removed. If a thought could sweep him from her view, she would not banish him. As an outward shape, a friendly and familiar form, this grey-haired man is a part of her surroundings and every part has changed beneath a magic touch. No object now external to herself—save one: the thing she loves—can trouble her delight. Looking round the room she finds new pleasure to her eye in all she looks at.

In the workroom, ere the work begins, she is perhaps alone with her love for a minute. If not then, later the chance will

come. The long kind day will bring them chances, stolen words in every gliding hour. There is no hurry: they two will be alone though all the world should watch and strive to hold her from him.

"Sybil, he will let us go this afternoon. I shall say I mean to go for a long ride after tea. Then he will say you are to go with me. He is sure to let you go."

"Yes. Jack, do you know this is our third day?"

"Don't count them. I daren't count them. Eleven more days—in which we need never have a thought outside ourselves—eleven days in which no one can disturb us. Sybil, I'll tell you what we must do this afternoon——"

Then, with her hand upon his mouth, with eyes smiling into eyes, she stops him.

"Hush! He is coming."

And they go to their task—like two plotting schoolmates, they get to their desks when the master's step is heard.

Once or twice only, she spoke of the future. It was as though a cold wind for a moment had made her shiver.

"Jack—later on, what are we to do? What can we do—in the future?"

But he would not face the future: at the sound of the word he too seemed to shiver, as though in the midst of sunlight a cold wind had struck him.

"I don't know. I—I can't think."

They had come from the garden into the summer-house—into the pleasant sunlit room where Effie used to sit with him, where now all whispered to him of Effie.

"I can't think," and he stammered, and hid his eyes with his hand. "I daren't think of it." Then, dropping his hand, he sank into a chair and sat staring in front of him. "I daren't think. Don't make me think of it."

"What can we do? O Jack, what can we do—in the end?"

"Listen. For ten more days we needn't think of it. We are safe—at any rate—till she comes back."

"I can't give you up. I can never give you up—now."

"No," and again he hid his eyes. "Sybil. This is what it will come to—no, don't make me think of it. Don't make me think of it—yet. We have ten more days."

The good thought warmed her heart again. She had shivered in the sunlight at the thought of a cold wind—that was all. And they talked of the future no more.

But of their love she talked unceasingly. Often she spoke as young girls speak to boyish sweethearts—with the childish jests of youth. Often, as she spoke, her voice vibrated with the passionate strength of slow maturity. While she stood by his side, the sight of common trivial things now brought the laughter to her lips, now filled her eyes with tears.

"Why do you love me really, Jack? I am old."

Each time she said it, he checked her, forbade her ever to say it again.

"But tell me why? I am not pretty, really. *Interesting*, Jack? That's what people used to say of me—a long time ago. Interesting. Is that why you like me?"

He was her escort now—not Effie's escort—for long bicycle rides. When her husband told her to go, she made no pretence of disinclination.

"Go, dear—it will do you good. Don't trouble about me. I shall do very well. I think I shall potter about in the garden and then lie down again."

"Yes, I should like to go—if you can spare me," and she laid her hand on his shoulder, with the old gesture of gratitude for the kindly thought."

"Don't hurry, Stone. Have a good round. I shall do very well."

And away they went, with the warm sun on their backs, with the cool breeze on their faces, gliding side by side over the wide downs into the sleepy valleys.

Walking side by side up the long slopes, he would take her bicycle from her now and push the two machines. As her escort he had never been allowed to do this in the old

days; and once now, when he reminded her of how resolute she used to be, she laughed, and struggled with him to retain her hold upon the handles.

"You are not to do it. Let go. Jack—you are not to do it."

A *char-à-bancs* came clattering down the hill making a cloud of white dust, and to escape the dust he pulled the bicycles across the dry stubble to a little distance from the road. In a cloud of dust, with noise and laughter, the load of September tourists went clattering by them. Men and girls sitting with linked fingers looked at them and laughed—seemed to read the secret with one glance as they jolted past.

Then he wheeled the bicycles over the crackling stubble till they came to the crest of the down, where the road is sunk between chalk banks, and here, with linked fingers, sitting side by side on the dry ground, they talked of their love.

"Tell me exactly how you have thought of me—the truth, Jack—no inventions. Then I'll tell you."

"Well then—I must take you a long time back—to things that you've forgotten—years ago."

"O Jack. You didn't think of me then? Not so long ago as that?"

"Yes. Far longer. From the very first—from the first day——"

"I don't believe it——"

"Yes. The first hour that I saw you."

"I don't believe it."

"When you and I were alone in the workroom—when you were showing me everything. I felt it even then."

"What did you think of me?"

"I thought you were like a sorceress in a cave—that you were weaving a spell about me."

"Did you like it? What did you feel?"

"It was nothing—a wave of hot thought as you stood beside me—then gone. You had woven your spell about

me. That was what it meant. . . . And then I used to think of you—at night—when I was alone—not when I was with you."

"What did you think?"

"Am I to tell you?"

"Yes—*everything*."

"I thought how good you were—how cold you were. It was sacrilege to think of you and love. But I was always sacrilegious, and I thought of that poem of Browning's. The man who stands in his room at night and mesmerises the woman he wants—mesmerises her till she comes nearer and nearer to his room—till at last he draws her to the room itself—and I thought: suppose I could do that to you!"

"It is what you have done."

"That was my thought from the first—yet, when I was with you, such thoughts faded. But I stayed because of you. Sybil, I could not go away."

"You could not go away? You did not want to go away?"

"I don't know. I had to stay. Shall I tell you any more?"

"Yes—*everything*."

"Then slowly—slowly, but surely—you became my torment and my delight. I only lived in the thought of you. Sometimes—at work, when I came and looked over your shoulder, it was a miracle that I did not stoop and put my lips to yours. . . . Once, when you fell from your bicycle—do you remember?—and I held you in my arms and thought that you were hurt, it was a miracle that I did not tell you then. . . . But I never let you guess—you never guessed?"

"Never."

"You never guessed. When did you guess? Now you must tell me. You promised."

"I'll tell you all I can. I ought to have known that day when you said you were unhappy—I ought to have known, because it made *me* so unhappy. But I didn't. Jack, I swear I didn't know."

"When did you know?"

"Not till you told me. Jack, I never really knew till then. . . . Do you believe? I was miserable about your engagement—utterly miserable from the first, but I never guessed why—not at first. How can I make you understand—make you believe? I think, now, that I *wouldn't* guess. I was afraid to know the truth."

Day after day the sun shone on them. In the gliding days that they feared to count, summer lingered with them—like life fighting death, fought with autumn and decay: fought and triumphed for their sake, day after day of the gliding days.

Vivid colour surrounded her. Each time that her hand touched his, she stood in the enchanted land that joy made of the common homely scene. She had thought of this when brooding on Effie's happiness. Now the fairyland was hers—a brighter land than poor Effie could have ever known.

Far or near it was all one: colour and dancing light. Stealing out to walk upon the cliff to clasp and unclasp hands while they sat upon a bench beneath the wall, or miles away from home when they had been sent forth on their bicycles, she was conscious of the change—the magic change in all the common world.

Once she took him past Slanes to the little wood on the hillside, to sit with him where she had sat alone and wept, to lie in ecstasy where she had writhed in torment. Shading her eyes with her hand, she told him all her thoughts, told him of the sadness that had hung like a veil over land and sea. Now, the sunlight dazzled one. Fairies had made the valley with fields of topaz, and trees of green glass with fairy lamps behind them: had rolled streams of white flame, and set Bevis Castle like a glittering toy to flash and sparkle high above trembling sands and flaming water.

"O Jack. Why do you love me---really? I can't believe it even now."

Riding, walking, or sitting hand-in-hand, she talked of their love—gloried in her love.

“Why do you love me? I am old.”

“No. You mustn’t say that. You must never say that. It is not true, and I have forbidden you to say it.”

“Your poor slave is sorry. Consider that I have knelt and kissed your hand. Beat your slave but don’t be angry with her.”

“You are not my slave. You are my goddess.”

“Your wicked goddess—your sibyl—who sat chained in a cave, waiting for her deliverer—who sat waiting, Jack—year after year, growing sadder and older and uglier—for thirty-three years.”

“You are not to say it. Do you hear me? You are twenty-three.”

Then she laughed.

“Am I what you want?”

“Yes.”

“All that you want?”

“Yes.”

Day by day the sun shone on them; and, as night drew near, the grey dusk had no sadness for them. Now she understood why lovers who walk with linked arms seem to seek the kindly veils of the falling night, and can watch without regret the red sun dip behind the waves.

Coming home in the darkness with him, the night was as beautiful as the day. White mists spread from the sun-dried fields; the dew was heavy on the dusty road, and their wheels spun noiselessly upon the moistened surface: without sound, without effort or fatigue, they flitted side by side, like ghosts of long-dead lovers, through the mist across the down. In front of them the sky glowed red and purple; above them the great vault, as it darkened, came lower and lower, then rose again, brightening, softly glittering, filling itself with stars.

On the ridge of the down near home, where the ground began to slope towards the cliffs, they dismounted for him to

light the lamps. He allowed her to hold the bicycles while he stooped to his work—bringing out his box of matches, lifting the lamp shutters ; and for a moment or two, till he struck the match, her eyes, her brain drew in all the calm splendour of the night. They seemed to be standing in a wide vague world of their own—two lovers on a planet of their own, with no life nearer to them than the life of the nearest star.

Then, as he struck his match, and the tiny flame glared in her eyes, it was as if the universe closed in upon them, hiding them, shutting them in with black-curtained walls, and they stood in a narrow room, with locked doors that no human hand could break. In the darkness, ere yet her eyes could pierce the black walls, he took his bicycle from her hand, and with his arm round her waist drew her to him in a close embrace.

Then again they mounted ; and, with lamps burning bright, they glided homeward—without effort, without fatigue, like shadows that flitted after a moving flame, they passed down the long hill that led them to the dishonoured home.

“ Jack. What am I ? Say it.”

“ My wicked Sybil.”

“ No. Your willing slave.”

And indeed she is as wax in his hands now. She has given herself to her love with an abandonment so absolute that already it almost frightens him. In the midst of his joy, he has in truth suffered agonies of shame. He dare not think. He fights with thought, drives it from him : weakly struggles to forget the past, to forget there is a future, to love only in the passing hour. He struggles to forget all things except the love-warmed hour ; yet even while he is locked in her embrace, the thought of the man he has wronged chills his blood—as a knife, shame stabs him.

But she seems to have forgotten what shame is—or never to have known. She is without regret, without remorse. All thought seems paralysed. She is wrapped in soft flames. If

now for a moment a thought of the treason comes, it has only this power—to make the joy fiercer and yet more sweetly dear.

She abates nothing of her care for her husband: does not hate him, does not dread him. Late at night she reads to him—sits by his bedside, smooths his pillow, folds his rug, and reads him to sleep in a calm, unhurried voice. She does not hear perhaps when he speaks: reads till he gently pulls her sleeve. She is far away—in another world. He is going to sleep now. Softly she moves about the room, methodically arranging the room, shading the night-light, putting match-box, water, glass on the table by his bed. There is no hurry: all is quiet movement—custom unchanged, old habits unruffled. Then she goes into her own room, walks about softly, comes back and looks at him. He is sleeping now. She sits for a long time by his bed—waiting. No hurry. Then, at last, she leaves him—glides downstairs, glides through the dark hall, to the workroom door. All the house is dark: all the house, all the world, with all its life, has been blotted out in night and sleep, as she glides in through a door of fire and then in the darkness seeks her love with open arms.

XVII

EFFIE was coming home. The two golden weeks had passed as a dream, and now life with all its sordid reality claimed them. They had made no plans.

"Jack. She is to come by the five o'clock train. She will be here before dinner—by seven o'clock—at the latest."

"I know."

"She has written to you, of course."

"Yes. She has written to me every day. I have scarcely read her letters—till the one that came this morning."

"But you have answered her letters?"

"Yes. I have answered them—only a few words—only what was necessary."

"Enough to prevent her suspecting anything? She does not suspect?"

"No. She does not suspect."

Their dream was over. They stared at each other blankly as they stood before their desks in the workroom. Their joyous dream had come to an end. Only their love was left to them—their impossible, traitorous love, in which henceforth there could be neither solace nor ease. Henceforth they would be hemmed round with nightmare difficulties, from which there could be no escape unless through disaster and disgrace.

After six o'clock all the quiet household was astir with fussy expectation. Maids opening and shutting doors talked gaily. Miss Effie was returning: and the maids bustled about her room, chattered in the passages, drew curtains close, turned up the well-trimmed wicks of lamps, rearranged flowers in vases—fussily strove to give brighter touches to the bright home picture. All the household loved her; all were happy in the thought of her return.

Mr Burgoyne in his workroom moved about restlessly: un-

able to work, unable to read—only able to look at his watch again and again, to rub his hands gleefully, then clasp them behind his back and walk out into the hall to look at the hall clock.

“She should be with us in fifteen minutes, eh, Stone? . . . In a quarter of an hour I expect her. . . . The train should now be coming in. Steam shut off—rattling along by the river, eh, Stone? She will take Mrs Townley to the vicarage first—unless Mrs Townley gets a fly for herself—and that is improbable. What do you think?”

“I think Effie will take Mrs Townley to the vicarage.”

“So do I, Stone. And it is what we would prefer, eh? We do not wish that Effie should bring Mrs Townley here—to come between us and our welcome of Effie. To-morrow will be time enough for good Mrs Townley—she is a kind good soul—but not to-night—not to-night.”

Then very soon, when he had gone once more into the hall, his voice came loud and cheerful.

“She is coming. I can hear the wheels, Stone. She is here.”

Following Stone, Sybil Burgoyne went out to the hall. Mary was standing by the open door, with her master; the sound of the cab wheels crunching over the gravel drew close; and, in sudden, unreasoning fear, the mistress of the house crept back, stole upstairs, and stood listening, trembling in the corridor.

Unreasoning fear shook her. By instinct the girl would guess. Intuitively, in her first scrutiny of the guilty face, the girl would snatch the truth from wavering eyes or tremulous lips. Creeping away, she opened her own door, then went to the door of Effie’s room, spoke to a servant—with a pretence that, as careful mistress of the house, she was ascertaining that candles burned, that the room was neat and tidy. Then she came slowly back to the head of the stairs and stood listening again—afraid to go down and meet the candid eyes, afraid to give the traitor’s kiss.

From the hall the voices rose—Stone’s voice, her husband’s

voice loud and cheerful in welcome, and the girl's voice clear and joyous as a bird's.

"O Uncle Richard. I seem to have been away for years."

Then slowly Sybil Burgoyne came down the shallow stairs—and gave the traitor's kiss, felt the girlish arms about her neck.

"O Aunt Sybil. I *am* so glad to be home. Have you all missed me? Say you've missed me?"

"Indeed we have missed you," said Mr Burgoyne cheerily. "One and all—my dear Effie—every hour in the day."

Then he slipped his hand through his wife's arm and gently drew her away, back with him to the workroom. They must not be selfish: they must not forget that the engaged couple are longing to be alone.

Mrs Burgoyne, looking back from the threshold of the workroom, saw the girl's face flushed with excitement, radiantly happy. The engaged couple were going to the morning-room—to the pretty little room that all the household considered as much Effie's own as the summer-house itself—and till the door closed behind them, laughter and innocent joy filled the air.

He has gone to play his traitor's part, to give his traitorous caresses, to hide his treason with the anticipated display of responsive delight. Holding her hand, with an arm about the slender waist, with fingers that press and fondle each time that the soft young hand and the bright young eyes ask for evidence of love, he will sit and listen to her babbling words: will smile, lift his eyebrows, nod his head, find some answering words, as she prattles in his ear—of the wedding, the dresses, the presents, of the wonders of the great town, of a dog at the great hotel; of herself, sad in the midst of so much gaiety, yearning to fly back to him; of Mrs Townley, intoxicated with London dissipations, never wanting to come back at all. Alone with her, behind the closed door, he is playing his traitor's part.

An eternity of time drags slowly by while husband and wife sit together in the workroom.

"They have so much to say to each other, Sybil. We

must let them get it over. Then Effie will be able to talk to us at dinner—to tell us all her adventures."

And he folded his hands, chuckled, smiled at his wife benignly.

"Sybil, dear, I think she is looking remarkably well—and prettier than ever. I'll vow Tom Frodsham's girl had no prettier bridesmaid than ours. . . . You think she is looking all right—not tired?"

"No, I think she looks very well."

"That's what I think. I think the little trip has done her good. Change—for the young—is always beneficial——"

Then, at last, looking at his watch, he said that now they might venture to disturb the happy pair.

"Surely now we may break up their *tête-à-tête*. If we don't go and dress now, we shall all be horribly late for dinner."

He and Effie went upstairs arm-in-arm presently, and, for a few moments, Sybil Burgoyne and the young man were alone. She looked at him with burning eyes, and clung to him with cold hands, and spoke to him in an almost hysterical whisper—a gasping, broken whisper.

"We—we can't go on—like this. We must face it now. Jack, you must be brave. What are we to do?"

"We *can* do nothing. It is fate—we can do nothing. We must wait. Sybil, if she knew, it would break her heart. If *he* knew, I believe it would kill him."

Their love-dream is over. Outwardly he is Effie's. All day long he is acting, with treacherous skill. Unconsciously Effie guards him closely, watches them with innocent eyes, is ever there to hold them apart.

And yet they meet and whisper in each day. Stealthily, fearfully, they seize the moments — throughout the hours are waiting upon chance. Now—now is the chance. Effie is sitting on the arm of her uncle's chair, is talking to him of Lord Frodsham—now they can whisper till they hear her light footfall. Listen! Effie has brought down all those

photographs—the wedding groups, the bride, the bridegroom—and is showing them to her uncle. These are their chances.

Or, better still, Effie has gone to church—has tripped away, and is praying and singing at evensong—is opening her guileless heart, letting all the joy and hope well forth in a hymn of gratitude to the kind anthropomorphic God in whose existence poor Effie believes. She is singing her gratitude to the dread Lord of Life for giving her life and crowning the life with love. Now—now is their chance. They are safe for an hour.

In such an hour, they walk in the darkness upon the cliff-path. They fear the dark garden now. Listeners may lurk beneath the trees: *she* may have followed them. As they steal beside the espalier hedge, by the long border, they pause and listen intently. Was that only a movement of the dead leaves stirred by the wind? Wait and listen. Was it a footprint? Dead twigs that crack beneath their feet make them start in fear, make their hearts beat thick and fast. With infinite precaution he manipulates the latch of the garden door, then with lowered head and peering eyes creeps out and glides to and fro, assuring himself that no one lurks in the shadow of the flint wall, before he returns, silently draws her out, and slowly, softly closes the door.

They breathe more freely on the open cliff. They are safe now. No one has been watching them: no one will watch them now; but even here, alone between sky and sea, they whisper.

"What was she saying to you"—she whispers—"after lunch—I mean—when she called you back?"

"She was showing me something—in a letter—from a girl she met in London—some nonsense about me."

"She had talked of you to the girl?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Jack. Do you know that I suffer whenever you are with her—every moment? It is becoming torture to me—every moment. What were you talking of—all the time after tea?"

"Oh, why do you ask? Anything. Nothing. Do you think I don't suffer, too?"

"No. Not as I do."

Once he speaks almost with anger.

"Be reasonable. Don't try to make things harder to bear than they are already."

Once he says something that makes her shrink as if he had struck her.

"Jack. What do you mean?"

It has been in the tone, rather than the words themselves, when again she has forced him to speak of the future. Can he mean—though he dare not say it plainly—that to him their love is one of life's episodes, a bond with fetters that may be broken when they gall? Can it be that he is thinking of a time when he will look back on their love as an episode? Does he mean that, after years have glided, for him it should be but as a summer's dream: for her an indiscretion to be paid for in tears and then forgotten?

But he protests. He means nothing. How can she doubt him?

"You love me now as much as ever?"

"More than ever."

"You'll always love me—always?"

"While I live."

He has meant nothing. She cannot doubt his love.

In one of the stolen hours she sobbed upon his breast, clung to him with passionate strength, frightened him by a storm of emotion that no art of his could allay.

"I can't give you up, Jack. Do you understand? I can never give you back to her."

"No, no," and he tried to soothe and quiet her.

"Then what are you going to do, Jack? Don't let us be cowards. We must face it out. Don't let us be cowards."

"Sybil—I am a coward—where they are concerned. We—we must wait."

"How can I bear it? How am I to be sure that she won't win you back—in the end?"

Then, hushing her, soothing her, at last calming her, he

stammered out all the words of hope that he could summon to his tongue.

"There is only one thing—possible. Sybil, if it makes you too unhappy—if you are not content—to wait—then I shall have to go away. That is all I can think of—to go away—then write to her—break it off. Give her time to get over it—the disappointment—a long time. Then you must come away—not at once, after time has passed—a long time—and join me. Something may happen—" and she understood that he was thinking of the possibility of her husband's death. "Who knows? Fate may work for us. We may be happy—together then—in a long time."

"In a long time!" The echoed words came as a cry of despair. "Jack. I am old, and she is young," and he did not check her now when she used the word that he had forbidden her ever to use. "I am too old to wait a long time. If you went away from me, I know that I should never see you again."

XVIII

EFFIE had been home now for more than three weeks. October had come with boisterous winds and driving rain: day after day the grey clouds hurried inland from the stormy sea, and cloud and rain held the little world at Cliff Lodge fast bound in the narrow home circle. Bicycling was impossible; walking was nearly impossible: nothing but work was left to fill the leaden hours, and the circle narrowed itself within the book-lined walls of the workroom, became a circle of silent toil, with no sounds hour after hour to disturb the workers except the crackling of the wood fire and the monotonous beat of the rain upon the window.

Then one morning the sun shone again: lit up a garden full of yellow leaves, sodden, ruined flower beds, bare branches and broken branches—the wreck of autumn, over which the autumn wind blew chill and cruel, triumphing in the victory of death over life. Summer has gone; winter is coming: the year is dying fast.

Throughout the long rainy days Mr Burgoyne had been working steadily, smoothly, on the *Mechanism*: sailing on, as the grey clouds drove overhead, into the latter part of the great book; but now, in the cold sunlight, he seemed to look back and see behind him, looming large, ugly, threatening, that rough unfinished block of which he had spoken to his wife. It was as though when he thought of it his conscience pricked him, and with a sigh of resignation he submitted himself to an inevitable but most wearisome labour. He must stop the flying pencil, turn it, send it stumbling back to the drudgery of the earlier sections: must forego all pleasure in beating his time-table, and painfully plodding over other men's work, make good his neglected thought-areas though it should take a year to map them to his satisfaction.

One day, as he sat surrounded with books and portfolios, he pointed with his pencil at the bookshelves where Stone's wonderful brain pictures for so long had hung.

"Stone, my dear fellow, I thought—— Didn't you very kindly?" . . .

He had been looking at the shelves on the other side of the room, as if surprised that he could see them, as if he had expected to find them still hidden by the great sheets, as if until this moment he had not known that the sheets had been removed; and now he looked round at Stone in vague surprise.

"Stone? Those things—those very interesting things that you were good enough to get for me! Gone?"

"They are upstairs, sir. Shall I bring them down?"

"Will you? I do wish you would. I feel sure they were full of interest."

Then Stone went up to the box-room at the top of the house, where the rolled sheets were lying deep in dust, amidst broken furniture, worn-out trunks, and other forgotten lumber.

"Let me help you," said Effie. She had appeared on the landing and seen him, with black hands and dust-stained sleeves, emerge from the little door that led to the servants' floor. He had dragged out one of the heavy rolls.

"Wait a minute, Jack. I'll get my gloves and apron and I'll bring some dusters and a brush. I shall love it—I'd sooner help you myself, than call for Sarah."

Then, wearing her well-known tidying costume—blue apron and chamois leather gloves, she came and gave him aid in his nasty dusty task: came and prattled and made merry to cheer him in his cruel exertions. She was delighted to hear that the ugly pictures had at last been asked for by Uncle Richard.

"What did I tell you, Jack? Don't you remember? I knew Uncle Richard would want them sooner or later. Now he wants them, aren't you glad? You see—after all—your kindness hasn't been wasted."

A little time ago—only such a little time ago—Mr Stone would have thrilled with natural pleasure, with honest pride, because his employer had remembered a well-meant if feeble

attempt to further the noble work. Now, shame, like a cold knife, stabbed him as he stooped in the dark loft and groped for the second roll.

"I—I don't think he'll find much in them, Effie."

"You silly boy, of course he will," said Effie, gaily brushing and wiping. "He'll find *everything*; and they'll make his book *ever* so much better than if you hadn't got them for him. And you are a dear generous Jack to have bought them—they cost *ever* so much—and I am very very proud of you—always—even now, though you *are* all over dust."

Downstairs, when the dusted sheets had been hung in their old place and Mr Stone was exhibiting them, Mr Burgoyne looked at each as though really he had never seen it before. He stood before each ugly picture murmuring applause—by voice and eyes and gesture expressing the genuine admiration that at all times he felt for manipulative skill and mechanical art, no matter how displayed.

"Upon my word, Stone—in the old days—when I was in the wards—we should have said witchcraft—witchcraft! . . . Stay. Don't turn it yet. . . . But what is this? . . . The pyramidal tracts again. Yes. Wonderful. Any more cortical layers, Stone? Upon my word. How do they do it, Stone?"

He stood, lost in admiration, before a picture from Madrid; and, when he had examined all, he asked for the Madrid picture again: bade Stone leave it unrolled and go and sit down and rest.

"Yes. They are all good—excellent. But this is really grand. How clever they are nowadays. How easy they make things for everybody"; and while his wife and Stone exchanged glances from desk to desk, he stood before the picture, lost now in deep thought.

Truly a dreadful picture from Madrid: a vertical section, clean down through the cerebrum and basal ganglia. And beneath the picture a gruesome note:—

"No. 4561. Madrid. Cerebral haemorrhage. A poorly-fed male student: age, 35. Death after 28 hours: no recovery of consciousness."

Here, about the region of the internal capsule, one may trace the havoc caused by the rupture of the blood vessel. Here, indeed, is the mystery of life and death unveiled. Here one may clearly view the horrible, irrefutable union of mind and matter. This is the broken machine—now, where is the controlling spirit? These torn fibres and dislocated cells meant the end of life. Where was the immortal soul during those twenty-eight speechless, senseless, staring hours? Did the soul crouch terrified in the wrecked house of life—afraid to stay, yet more afraid to go? Did it wait till Spanish doctors round the bed declared that the house of life was vacant? Then at last, confusedly, as a bird flying by night, did it wing its way towards the eternities? Only Lord Frodsham and his friends can answer such questions.

In its purely physical aspect, the injury to No. 4561 (Madrid) is simple as the bursting of a water main beneath a city pavement—smashing buried gas pipes, telegraph and telephone wires, tearing and rending the sheath that insulates the electric light cable, etc., etc. Here, in the picture, one may see the little, local ruin—seeming, in the picture, a something that plumbers, gasfitters, etc., should mend. Matter displaced—no more. Yet here have flashed to and fro noble thoughts perhaps: dreams of a people's regeneration. Here, in fibre and cell, have flowed together as yet unspoken words of eloquent speeches—here have been visions splendid when food warmed the blood, or dark-hued prophetic gloom as famine robbed it of its fulness and its force. Most horrible, indissoluble union of mind and matter, only to be denied by Lord Frodsham and his friends.

On this bright afternoon bicycling was again possible: the wind had dried the roads and now had almost ceased to sweep them. Stone and Effie invited Mrs Burgoyne to be their companion; the invitation was at once accepted; and immediately after lunch the three riders started on their ride.

During their absence Mr Burgoyne took a solitary walk upon the cliff. As he walked along the sunlit path—with his hands

clasped behind his back, stooping slightly, thinking deeply, or as he paused, straightened himself, and with head well raised looked out to sea—he offered a noble mark for amateur photographers. But the snap-shooting summer tourists had with their cameras all gone home to Brixton, Norwood, etc. Only a few resident nursemaids were here to stare and whisper as he passed. No doubt as he walked—looking at the nursemaids with unseeing eyes—he was mentally busy with those uncompleted troublesome sections of his book, polishing, rearranging, grouping his rough-hewn materials ; and it seemed that as the thought deepened he walked faster, hurrying on till abruptly he stopped again as if in sudden fatigue that brought him to a standstill and held him motionless, unconsciously resting his body while the mind still worked.

In one of these musing pauses, a small red-bearded man saluted him very ceremoniously. It was Mr Allen, the solicitor—that red-haired solicitor who many years ago had been rude to the great man when writing about the maintenance of the lane between the walled gardens, whose outrage had always been remembered by the loyal household of the Lodge, who, as Effie said, was never never to be forgiven if he lived to a hundred years. But Mr Burgoyne had forgotten him ; to Mr Burgoyne, with no Effie prompting, he was a quite meaningless figure : a red-haired man bowing politely. Mr Burgoyne raised his round cloth hat in response to the courtesy.

Then it seemed that because Mr Allen was small and insignificant and Mr Burgoyne was large and noble and dignified, and that they met thus face to face on the empty path, the small man was constrained to address the big man : that it was a physical impossibility for insignificance to slide by without uttering humble words to greatness.

“Mr Burgoyne ! I hope you are very well,” and Mr Allen nervously offered his hand.

Mr Burgoyne pulled off his woollen glove, shook hands, and smiled. This then was somebody he ought to know—not an affable stranger.

“What a pleasant afternoon,” said Mr Burgoyne genially.

"It is," said Mr Allen. "But there is a sharpness in the air," and they walked on side by side.

"Are you," asked Mr Burgoyne, "down here for any time? Are you making a stay in this neighbourhood?"

"Oh I," said Mr Allen nervously. "I er still live here."

"To be sure," said Mr Burgoyne. "You—you have not given up poor little Whitebridge. You are faithful to Whitebridge."

"Mr Burgoyne. You don't know me, sir," and Mr Allen seemed much abashed.

"I know *you*, my dear sir—oh yes, very well—but I am woefully stupid about—names."

"I am Mr Allen—the solicitor," and the little man's eyes questioned the great man's face.

Still Mr Allen was forgotten. Neither name nor profession served to recall his existence to the vast working mind. He was a meaningless figure on the cliff-path—a polite nonentity.

"Well," said Mr Allen, with a nervous laugh, "I see you don't remember, sir—and I am not sorry—in a manner. We had something in the way of—an unpleasantness—a long time ago——" and he waved his arm towards the flint walls—"about that bothersome lane. I was representing the executors of the late Colonel Garrett. It was a silly dispute and," added Mr Allen with a gulp, "I am afraid I was rude to you over it."

"Surely not?"

"Oh yes, sir. I admit it now. We lawyers get hot over our clients' business, and I know now I was uncommonly rude to you."

"Surely not?"

Mr Allen laughed jovially.

"I have turned over the correspondence—in my old letter-book—often, and I see I was too hot—I was fairly rude to you—trying to bustle you——"

Mr Burgoyne had stopped again, and again he drew himself to his full height, with the noble head well raised. The kindly smile had gone, and he looked down at the little red-headed man with cold investigation in the steady eyes.

"Mr—Allen. You keep telling me you were rude to me. I had forgotten the circumstance. But Mr—Allen, if we are ever rude, there is only one thing for us to do: to express unequivocal regret. Am I to understand that this is what you are trying to do now?"

"Yes," said Mr Allen with another gulp. "Regret. Apologies. Sincere regret. What more can I say?"

"Not a word," and Mr Burgoyne smiled again, walked on again. "It was nothing—less than nothing. Let us never give a thought to it again——"

He walked back with Mr Allen nearly to the end of the flint walls, and talked to him kindly, even cordially.

"You prosper, I hope, Mr Allen? Your practice grows with the growth of the town?"

"Well sir, so, so. I mustn't complain. But it's a stagnant little place—at the best. If on any occasion—I should esteem it an honour to act for you——"

"Well, the fact is, Mr Allen—I am in the hands of old friends in London—and, as you may guess, I do not often need a lawyer's aid. But—should an opportunity occur—I mean local business—" and Mr Burgoyne had a friendly smile—"yes.—I would be glad of your advice. Good-night, Mr Allen."

Then he turned and, with hands clasped behind his back, walked again briskly beneath the garden walls. In front of the last of the benches he stopped in sudden weariness, and then for a considerable time sat and rested. He had put his cloth hat on the seat beside him; and, warmed by exercise, he let the keen sea-breeze cool his forehead. He sat until the sharp crisp air made him shiver: then he rose abruptly, and slowly and wearily came back to the Lodge. Alone, with no wife or niece to take care of him, he had walked too far and too long: he could not work after tea.

At dinner he recounted how he had been favoured with company on the cliff.

"Mr Allen engaged me in conversation. We discussed

the state of trade and so forth. I gathered from Mr Allen that Whitebridge is not—what do they call it?—*booming*,” and he chuckled as though he enjoyed the sound of this cant word. “In Whitebridge I fancy there is no semblance of a *boom*.”

“Mr Allen?” cried Effie. “O Uncle Richard, you didn’t talk to Mr Allen, the solicitor?”

“Yes, my dear Effie, I did.”

“O Uncle Richard,” said Effie in distress. “That really was naughty of you. You know we all said he was *never* to be forgiven. Did he ask for pardon? Did he apologise?”

“We both agreed to let bygones be bygones.”

“Really,” said Effie, “it was naughty of you. Now I suppose he’ll talk whenever we meet him.”

But Effie, before the evening was over, discovered that her uncle had been guilty of something naughtier than making peace with an ancient enemy. He had sat on a seat and caught a chill. He could not lie on the sofa in the drawing-room; he walked about restlessly; his face was flushed; he admitted that he felt “slight pains” in back and legs. Cross-examined by Effie he confessed.

“My dear Effie, I was thinking, you know. It did not occur to me that there was any risk. Then, all at once, I felt cold; and then I own that I knew I had done wrong.”

“If you are ill,” said Effie in great distress, “I shall be miserable—because it will be our fault for leaving you.”

“Why should I be ill, dear?” And as he spoke his face was drawn by a twinge of pain—“It is nothing at all—just the slightest chill.”

“O Aunt Sybil, what can we do? Oughtn’t he to go to bed? Oughtn’t Jack to run and fetch Dr Wren?”

“No,” said Mr Burgoyne. “Certainly not. Effie, I should be angry if anyone sent for George Wren.”

“Then will you go to bed—and be kept warm?”

“Yes, my dear,” replied the author of the uncompleted *Mechanism of Thought*. “Yes, Effie,” he said meekly. “I think I will go to bed.”

XIX

NEXT morning he said he was thoroughly well. His night had been "very slightly disturbed" by pain—if pain it could properly be called—in his back, his thighs, his joints; but he had obtained sleep—"some good, refreshing sleep." He was all right, and certainly he would not see Dr Wren. The good doctor would laugh at him. Doctors should be sent for in sickness, not in health.

Yet the work was stopped. Throughout the long morning hours he doggedly persevered in his effort to work as he had worked yesterday, and utterly failed. He had drawn the arm-chair much closer to the fire than was usual, and he sat with poised pencil—with a pencil which would copy notes, but which would not write one word of a new thought. To Stone it seemed that he had so piled the books upon his table in order to screen his blank manuscript paper and the stubborn pencil from prying eyes; and across the screen of books he stared at one of those ugly pictures on the wall, as if waiting for, struggling for an impulse that never came.

Just before lunch when he and Stone were alone, the young man asked him if he would not care to lie down on the big leather couch.

"No, Stone. I think not. I think I am better here—sitting snug by the fire."

"May I bring in your lunch—so that you need not have the trouble of moving?"

"Oh no, Stone. I will go into the other room. Is luncheon ready? *I am ready,*" and he smiled. "Sharp set, Stone. Very well. I'll take your arm, my dear fellow—if you'll let me."

Arm-in-arm with Mr Stone he came to the luncheon-table; talked and laughed; refused to be dealt with as an invalid;

but, in spite of his boasted appetite, he ate as an invalid eats—a very little, very slowly.

He leaned upon his wife's arm in returning to the work-room. He leaned lightly on her arm and he pressed it gently as he spoke.

"I do not need it, Sybil dear; but I like to know it's there—my prop, my staff, if need should ever come"; and, as he sank into the arm-chair, he took her hand and patted it. "What a cold, cold hand, Sybil! Now, don't worry yourself about me, dear. Now I shall do very well—snug and warm by the kind fire."

In the hall, Effie was talking anxiously to Mr Stone, and Mrs Burgoyne came to them presently.

"I have been telling Effie," said Mr Stone, "that he is certainly not quite himself. I think there is certainly something amiss."

"Seriously amiss," you said.

"Well, Effie—I only meant by that: at his age *everything* is serious."

Then all three discussed what should be done. Since the master of the house had expressly forbidden them to send for Dr Wren, it seemed wrong to disobey. And yet? Stone said that he thought Mr Burgoyne should be kept quiet: it would be wise perhaps for Mrs Burgoyne and Effie to refrain from sitting with him, and talking to him. Of course they could come in and see him now and then. Let him rest quietly all the afternoon: then, perhaps, some time before dinner, Stone might slip away and arrange with Wren for an accidental visit in the evening. Wren could come up to borrow a book.

"But you won't leave him, Jack?" said Effie anxiously. "You'll be with him all the time—till you let one of us come?"

"Yes. I mean to stay with him."

He was not resting when Stone entered the quiet workroom. He was busy with books and notes, trying to work and failing. Stone, pretending to be busy at his desk, cautiously observed him. Obviously he was weary, listless, fighting against his natural inclination—while he read in one of his annotated

volumes or slowly copied out a line or two. The stubborn pencil was growing more stubborn: it was not only refusing to jot down new thoughts but refusing to transcribe old thoughts. Soon the pencil stopped altogether, and Mr Burgoyne merely read his book.

“Jack!”

Mr Stone looked up quickly. It was the first time that Mr Burgoyne had ever addressed him by his Christian name.

“Jack—my dear fellow. You don’t mind,” and smiling, he seemed to read the young man’s thought. “The other sounds so—cheerless. You don’t mind my calling you Jack?”

“No indeed, sir,” said Mr Stone in a low voice. “I’ve very often wished that you would.”

“But you never asked me. I waited. I thought—when you and Effie—I thought you’d ask me then. I waited. . . . What was I about to say? O Jack! A little secret. You know—our anniversary—the fifteenth of November. That’s more than a month ahead of us, but I have a surprise for my wife. Effie kindly bought it for me—while she was in London—from a fashionable jeweller. I have hidden it, Jack, in the bottom letter-drawer—below the bundles marked *Individual*, in the right-hand corner. That’s where it is.”

“Shall I get it for you?”

“Oh no. But that’s where it is. It is somewhat fine,” and he smiled complacently. “Entirely Effie’s taste. I teased her, Jack, by saying it was *flashy*,” and he chuckled. “It certainly does flash. And that is where it lies hidden—when the time comes.”

Hastily rising, the young man came across to the hearth and made up the fire. It seemed that, in his turn, he had read unspoken thoughts.

“Sir. If you have any feeling that you—that you may be—may be in for any sort of real illness—don’t you think you ought to lie up?”

“Jack, I don’t want to lie up.”

“No, sir. But I mean—when one is out of sorts, bed *is* the best place.”

"Is it, Jack?" . . . And, looking into the fire, still smilingly, he talked in a low, thoughtful voice. "We old boys do not love our beds as much as once we did, perhaps. We come to dread the thought of being laid up—to rest. . . . It sets us thinking of the narrow beds in which no man can toss or turn—the narrow beds men make beneath the ground. No, Jack, I don't *want* to be ill."

"I wish you'd tell me how you feel."

"There were pains, Jack, but since the morning they have gone—I have had scarcely any pain since the morning. . . . Nevertheless, I must own I do not feel comfortable—a general sense of discomfort. But nothing worth speaking of."

Sitting at his desk again, the young man thought and watched. His hand trembled once as he rearranged his papers, keeping up the pretence that he was busily employed. Dark thoughts came thronging, as cautiously he turned his head from time to time. Dark thoughts that he vainly strove to banish made his pale face glow in dusky shame, as furtively he observed the grey old man in the big chair.

He was shuffling his feet, and presently he told Stone that his feet were numb and cold.

"Upon my word—Jack. For a chill—a most confound-ed chill," and he got up and stood before the fire; leaning an elbow on the mantelpiece, while he warmed his feet one after the other close to the bars of the grate.

Then, after looking down at the glowing coals for a minute or two, he turned away from the fire and shaded his eyes with his hand. Then Stone saw him totter and nearly fall. In fact, as Stone saw, he only saved himself from the fall by clutching at the big arm-chair. He had been like a man who suddenly and quite unexpectedly loses his balance. In the moment that he shaded his eyes, control of equilibrium was destroyed.

Stone, so completely startled that he could not speak, had sprung up from his desk. He had seen this sort of thing before. Anæsthesia of the soles of the feet. This—thought Stone—is the only cause that could have produced the peculiar and

abrupt difficulty in maintaining the upright position as soon as he ceased to use his eyes.

"I think I heard Effie's voice," said Mr Stone. "I'll be back directly, sir," and he hurried out of the room.

His face looked scared and white as he talked to Mrs Burgoynes and Effie in the doorway of the morning-room.

"Yes. Get one of the servants to go down to Wren—and tell him to come at once. . . . Yes. I think now that he is ill—seriously ill. . . . No, we can do nothing. . . . Better not try to do anything till Wren comes."

Then he hurried back to the workroom, and sat watching and waiting.

Mr Burgoynes, sitting quietly in his chair, reading no more, looked ruefully at his legs, and Stone saw him two or three times lift a leg with both hands and alter its position. He did not attempt to cross his legs. When Mrs Burgoynes came in and lingered for a few minutes by the fireside, he did not stir; but he smiled at her and said a few words to her.

"Why aren't you out, Sybil dear? You ought to go out and have a good walk. You must not—trouble about me."

When, after half-an-hour, Effie, in her hat and jacket, came into the room, he smiled at her, and asked her to take her aunt for a walk. Effie had herself gone to Dr Wren's house, and now, as she stood beside Stone, she laid a piece of paper on his desk.

"Dr Wren has gone away by train," she had written on the paper. "But expected back at five o'clock. They will send him without delay."

Then again Stone was left to watch and to think. Wren would be here soon. Wren would know what it was. Wren would be able to think calmly: his brain would be clear, would not be working behind curtains of darkly treacherous thought. What could it be—what else? The young man's heart seemed to stop and then to race—driven by shame and by fear. Was it fate? In the gathering dusk, over there between the shadows and the firelight, was Fate with its hidden shears beginning to cut the threads of life—beginning to act

as the servant of his own base thought? He had thought of it again and again. Only across a grave could they find a path to freedom. Sooner or later death might help them. Summoned by his thought, was the grim assistant coming now? His hand shook, and his heart beat fast in fear as he remembered all his thoughts.

"How are you feeling, sir?" He had lit the candles on the mantelpiece. Some tea had been brought by Mrs Burgoyne, and put on the table by her husband's side.

"Well, Jack. No pain. But a sense of oppression." Then, after a long pause: "And, Jack. I have lost all power in my legs—from the knees downwards."

Stone was sure now—had no longer a doubt. This was the onset of acute ascending paralysis. What else could it be?

It was a few minutes past six when Dr Wren arrived. Effie, in despair when he did not appear at five o'clock, had been distressfully rushing to and fro—to his house again, to the railway station, to the cottage hospital, and once more to the station: where at last she had found him, looking big and strong and calm among the straggling group of passengers from the five-fifty train.

"Let's have a look at him, Miss Effie," and Dr Wren's firm kind voice calmed one's nerves. "Don't let's lose our heads."

To Dr Wren, taking off his shaggy overcoat in the hall, Mr Stone came breathlessly—to draw him out of Effie's hearing, to recite the symptoms, to tell him in a husky whisper that he now is sure it is acute ascending paralysis.

"Let's have a look at him," said Dr Wren—repeating this phrase as his only reply to Stone's excited description of the symptoms.

"Yes, yes. Let's have a look at him."

Then Dr Wren, ushered into the room, sees the man whom of all living men he most reveres. Yet sees him no more as Richard Burgoyne the great philosopher, the giant of thought whose silent unfaltering work for forty years has moved the world with admiration and respect—sees only a

patient sitting huddled in a chair, turning his head listlessly and showing a flushed face. The doctor has been struck, even as he crossed the threshold, by something characteristic in the patient's attitude—a limpness that is more than languor : he is feeling the wrist-looseness as he shakes hands with the patient ; he is thinking hard, studying plain evidence, seeking less upon material, while he talks to the patient in his cheerful, friendly, unconstrained voice.

"Why, what have you been doing, sir? Catching cold before October's done—that's not the way to begin the winter," and, after feeling the patient's pulse, he goes on talking pleasantly while he takes the patient's temperature.

The pulse is over a hundred : the temperature is 101° F.

Then he asks a few questions of the patient ; and then, with the assistance of Mr Stone, he moves the patient into a smaller chair. And then Dr Wren and Mr Stone—each with an arm of the patient hanging loosely round his neck—carry the patient in the chair upstairs to the first floor, undress the patient ; put the patient comfortably to bed in his comfortable room.

Then, when Mr Stone had gone downstairs again and patient and doctor were left alone together, they talked for the first time of the case.

"What is it, Wren? The spinal cord, eh? Paraplegia, eh? The cord attacked!" and the patient looked up into the doctor's friendly eyes.

"Oh no, sir," said the doctor. "Nerves attacked, yes—but nowhere near the cord. Nothing to worry us. But annoying, of course."

"But, Wren? I am so rusty—but I haven't forgotten everything. What used they call it? . . . Yes. I have that confounded girdle sensation," and he made a gesture indicating an imaginary band round his waist.

"Oh no," said Wren, with a smile. "Your memory is too good, sir. If you hadn't remembered, perhaps you wouldn't have had the sensation. No. This is the effect of that unlucky chill. Inflammation of peripheral nerves."

"O Wren? From a slight chill? Surely not?"

"Well, sir—let's say the chill was the determining cause. No doubt we must suppose—this state of affairs has been slowly preparing itself—during a long period. Shall we say that yesterday all was ready? The fire was laid—only the match was wanted."

"Yes?"

"And so to-day, we have widespread trouble," and the doctor waved his hand over the bed—over the patient's lower limbs, "in the peripheral endings."

"Multiple neuritis?"

"Yes, sir, that's its nasty name," said Wren, smiling genially, "and that's its nasty nature. That's what it is—and nothing else."

"I'd like to think so. I don't like to think that my work is to be stopped—permanently."

"It is not going to be, sir. A longish job perhaps. Must keep you quiet, you know. But nothing to worry about."

"Thank you, Wren," said the patient. "You are the best of good fellows."

"Is it what I thought?"

Dr Wren in the hall was putting on his big coat, and Mr Stone and Mrs Burgoyne were delaying him. Effie, with her hand at her throat, watched his face but asked no questions.

"He is dangerously ill?" said Mrs Burgoyne.

"He is seriously ill—but there is no occasion for alarm. Nerve trouble. I will come back and tell you all about it directly. I want to send a telegram—and it's nearly eight o'clock."

"Is it what I thought?" asked Stone again, as he opened the hall door for the hurrying doctor.

"No. Oh no. Only the peripheral nerves. I'm going to wire to Isaac Keeling. Of course we must have another opinion. But I am quite sure. Don't let 'em fuss. I'll be back directly."

Effie went upstairs to the sick-room, and for a few minutes Mrs Burgoyne and Stone whispered together.

"Is he going to die? Jack—it is too horrible. Say he is not going to die."

"I—I thought so. But Wren—says no."

"Jack. I don't want him to die—I am frightened. It is as if—"

"I know. Don't think of that. I have been thinking of it. Wren says he is sure. I hope he is right—he would not have said he was sure—unless he knew."

Certainly Dr Wren seemed very sure of himself—to be willing to stake his professional reputation on the correctness of his opinion. Hurrying down to the post office, he had been just in time to get his telegram despatched before the office closed. The words of his message to the London specialist were quite unprofessional in their direct and explicit character.

"Richard Burgoyne just down with multiple neuritis. Please come and see him to-morrow."

It was certainly a "cock-sure" telegram to be received by a great London specialist from a humble country practitioner.

In the course of the evening Dr Wren explained matters very fully to Mrs Burgoyne, to Effie, and to Stone. They stood before the fire in the workroom, clustering as though instinctively about the empty chair, while the doctor gravely told them what must happen ere the empty chair could be used again by the owner of the room.

The sick man would be ill for a long time—for months and months he would lie upstairs motionless, helpless, to be nursed and guarded, jealously watched and lovingly tended by all who loved him. He would be helpless as a child in their hands—his body powerless, but his mind clear and bright. It would be just a long rest, a long anxious waiting for the tardy dragging cure. In this stationary stage of the illness there would be no change week after week, month after month; but they must not lose heart or think that hope was gone: unseen by them the good change would be coming

all the time. It might take a year—more than a year for the work of reparation to be completed—for the regeneration of nerve substance, for the rebuilding of life material in the minute threads that had suffered morbid change or degeneration.

"So that will be *our* task," said Dr Wren: "to wait, in patience, while Nature does *her* task. And if we are careful, I think we need not fear."

"You think"—said Effie in a choking voice—"you really expect he will recover?"

"Recover? Certainly. If we are careful, Miss Effie, I expect to see him in eighteen months from now, sitting in that chair—writing, reading, going on with his work as though nothing had ever happened to interfere with it."

Then, when Effie and her aunt had left them, he and Mr Stone chatted very learnedly about the case. As Wren talked—answering questions, explaining his views, meeting each point raised—Stone thought of what he had said years ago when speaking of his humdrum life, without dreams, without ambitions, with nothing to fill it but the simple work of the dull jog-trot round. "I am surer of myself now than I should have ever been"—that was what he had said when counselling the younger man to do the work that came nearest to his hand and abandon all his dreams. And truly the man seemed sure of himself. He was not brilliant; he was not deep; but he was strong: all that he knew, he knew thoroughly. Now, as always—whenever one put him to a practical test, that was the impression conveyed to one's mind.

"No, Stone. It could hardly have been what you feared. At any rate, it would have been improbable, wouldn't it—at his age, in his circumstances?"

"Of course I have seen something of this," said Stone. "I remember a painter brought in, who died the same night. But I thought it was always from a direct toxic agency—alcohol, arsenic—lead poisoning—"

"Well," said Wren, "and this is toxic—*auto-toxic*—*auto-gogenous* poisoning—whatever you like to call it."

"In the blood? Some by-product?"

"Yes. For a long time. Didn't you and I talk about it once? I have had a suspicion—well, a dread that things weren't quite as they should be—that things were going wrong—for a long time. Well, now we see. Perhaps, after all, it is better this way—than if he had staved it off till later."

That night, when the doctor saw the patient, there was a temperature of over 102—no appetite, some headache, and great thirst.

Early in the morning, when the doctor saw the patient again, the temperature had dropped to only a point above normal. There was no pain; but, from the hip-joints downwards, the paralysis was complete.

In the afternoon the London specialist saw the patient and said the patient was doing very well.

Dr Isaac Keeling was a bearded, middle-aged man—black and birdlike, with quick movements and a jerky manner. Almost he seemed a fussy, embarrassing sort of man, as Mrs Burgoyne with Dr Wren led him to the door of the sick-room. Then, as he passed through the door, he changed. Another—a quiet, reposeful, black priestlike man entered the sick-room and at once he and the sick man were talking in a most friendly easy fashion.

Coming downstairs again with Mrs Burgoyne after twenty minutes, Dr Keeling was again jerky, nervous, almost abrupt.

"Your husband is—your husband is truly wonderful. I have longed to make his acquaintance—but not thus. Certainly not. . . . Oh yes, he will go on very well, now. I'll come again. . . . Good-morning. . . . No, thank you. I have lunched."

"She is very young," said Dr Keeling, with a jerk of the head, as Wren and Stone ushered him into the workroom. "Might be his granddaughter from the look of her. . . . And she seems upset—unduly upset. Unnecessary agitation and excitement. He'll do all right."

Dr Keeling was a big man in the medical world—one of the five or six recognised authorities on the nervous system and its diseases. During the morning there had been discussion as to his fee. The master of the house had not spoken of the fee, but Mrs Burgoyne was anxious that the right thing should be done, that later on she should be able to tell the patient that there had been no forgetfulness of their obligation.

But Dr Wren had said that in his opinion the specialist would be huffed if care were not taken.

"I haven't seen him for years," said Dr Wren. "But unless he has greatly altered—he won't accept payment. Honestly, I don't think any of the big guns would pocket a fee for giving advice to Mr Burgoyne. . . . I think Keeling will thank me for the honour I have done him."

Then it had been arranged that Stone should cautiously sound the visitor.

Standing with his back to the workroom fire now, Dr Keeling asked a few jerky questions of Wren; and, with quick nods of the head, concurred in all that Wren had done.

Dr Wren was giving the patient salicylate of sodium—also some bromide of potassium last night and again this morning; but he now proposed to stop both these drugs.

"Just so," and the specialist nodded. Really he concurred in everything. He seemed to have scarcely any suggestions to offer. "Local treatment. . . . Massage. . . . Just so. Get him a water bed. . . . You are getting one? Just so. Keep him warm, keep him quiet, keep him as comfortable as you can—you know. . . . Well, I'll run down again whenever you like."

Then, after a few questions as to the history of the case, he paid Wren an abrupt compliment.

"Ah yes. Just so. Yesterday afternoon. You saw him at six o'clock, and you telegraphed about eight. . . . Well. You haven't gone to sleep down here. I call that a deuced good diagnosis," and he turned abruptly to Mr Stone. "What do you say, sir? Don't you agree with me?"

Mr Stone—thinking of his own diagnosis: acute ascending paralysis—thoroughly agreed.

"There's a train at three o'clock. I'll make my way to the station—on foot."

Then Mr Stone, not without awkwardness and hesitation, fulfilling his diplomatic mission, mooted the question of the specialist's fee.

"Oh ah," and Dr Keeling was painfully jerky. "My charges. Ah! *He* didn't tell you to ask me, did he? . . . No. I thought not. Mrs Burgoyne. . . . Yes, she's very young. Please beg her to dismiss it from her thoughts—no hurry about *that*. Beg her, too, to calm herself. Quite undue excitement. . . . But as to my fee—well, my fee will be a copy of one of his books, with his autograph on the title-page. *He* understands—good-morning."

Then, as he shook hands with Dr Wren, he did the very thing that Dr Wren had foretold. He thanked Dr Wren for the honour.

"I sha'n't forget your kindness in thinking of me. It is an honour—that I appreciate. Wire for me again as soon as you like. I'll bring Bowers or Grenville with me next time—if you like. They'll all be wanting to come—of course."

XX

THE patient had settled down into the stationary condition of the disease. He had begged that no trained nurse should be engaged—that he might be nursed by his wife and his old servants, with kind Jack Stone to render aid, with Effie as flying messenger, with his good doctor in supreme command.

Indeed Dr Wren was devoting all his spare time to the case—turning himself into the best of trained nurses and seeming to be ever at hand when his services could be of value. He was employing scarcely any drugs, but giving much local treatment: constant massage, and frequent application of galvanism to the unused muscles. He had procured a water bed to give the patient ease, and he had moreover swathed the legs and feet in cotton wool, bound round and kept in position by white bandages on the legs and by big woollen socks on the feet. He found that after the massage the wool served to retain the warmth thus artificially induced, and it also prevented any rubbing that might lead to bed sores.

Day after day, week after week—no change in the condition of the patient. He has no pain, his mind is clear, he can use his arms; but from the waist downwards all sensation has gone. He lies on his back, often with hands clasped across his breast—like a recumbent statue; and by night or day there is no movement below the hips. From the waist downwards he might be a man turned into stone. Seeing him motionless, hour by hour, day by day, it is as difficult to believe that he will ever leave his bed and walk as to believe that the marble figure of a knight lying at full length on his tomb will one day come to life and walk along the cathedral aisle.

This image of the recumbent marble statue is often in the mind of his wife, as with soft footfall she moves about the room. Especially it comes to her—with an increasing strength—while Wren is busy of a night with his bandages and wool. Then in the candlelight—in the yellow glow as of tapers from an altar—the stone figure, white from head to feet, lies stretched upon the white tomb.

And always, till the image fades, the thought is there. What but a miracle can ever make him rise and walk again?

Yet Dr Wren and Dr Keeling were both well satisfied with the patient and his state. Dr Keeling, paying his second visit, seemed less jerky, fuller of conversation outside the sick-room. He assured Mrs Burgoyne that all was as it should be. Three things only were required—patience, care, and time. He told Mrs Burgoyne that her husband was in good hands—Dr Wren knew what he was about. He congratulated Mrs Burgoyne on the fact that the situation and surroundings of her husband were, from the medical point of view, admirably propitious.

“In his home—in the care of those he loves. With nothing to worry or disturb him. Quiet—freedom from the slightest worry—is of course of paramount importance. I have told him that he must consider it an enforced holiday—a year’s rest, ordered by the doctors—and that he will go back to his work like a giant refreshed.”

“I hope he may.”

“What is that young lady’s name?”

“Effie—Miss Vincent.”

“Miss Vincent seems very sensible—steady. I have been telling *her* that you are all to make the holiday pleasant for him—keep him quiet but cheerful and contented. That is what you can do for him—nothing else. . . . So now, Mrs Burgoyne, cease to be alarmed—quite unduly. Do try to *calm* yourself—or *he* may suffer. Agitation and good nursing cannot go together.”

It was after Dr Keeling’s second visit that “our correspondents” got wind of something in the southern air. Till

then there had been no word of the illness in the public press. Then, in an hour, every newspaper seemed to be full of the words.

"Serious illness of Richard Burgoyne." . . . "Dangerous illness," etc., etc.

"The aged philosopher is lying between life and death in a darkened room in his beautiful mansion amid the pine woods a few miles from Whitebridge," etc., etc. The words were all wrong, of course. Hasty words, bosh words, any words—however foolish—rather than that the great word-loving public should go without words at all.

"Nothing could be more unfortunate for the world at large than his incapacitation at such a juncture. For years he has been engaged on his *magnum opus*—this vast undertaking being nothing less than an exposition of the systems of government in all lands, from the days of the Shepherd Kings to the Victorian era."—Any words, when time is short, when our outer forme is on the machines, when the carts are ranged and waiting in the yard!

Next day it was: "It would seem that local reports have exaggerated the gravity of Mr Burgoyne's indisposition. The aged philosopher is suffering from the effects of a cold, but these are nothing more than must be expected at his advanced age. It is hoped that in a day or two he will be out and about again." But the evening papers refused to accept such hopeful tidings. By nightfall the words ran large again. "Richard Burgoyne: Serious Relapse. Believed to be sinking."

Already practised hands had been ghoulishly busy upon the obituary notices—fetching out the long-prepared memoir from the editorial pigeon-hole—"writing it up to date."

"His last published book was *The Framework of Life*, etc. . . . While his loss is still poignantly fresh upon us, it is impossible to estimate, etc., etc. Suffice it now to say that he is sure of immortality. If in his later work he has perhaps seemed too physiological, too narrowly bound to the physiologist's outlook, too much obsessed with a study of the brain and its high functions, one must not forget that the science of mind

has ever been the one and only solid basis for a genuine system of philosophy, etc., etc."

Meantime our correspondents were beating upon the closed doors of the Lodge, and in every hour the telegraph boys were sounding the Lodge bells. From far and near came messages of sympathy and inquiry—from Societies, Public bodies, illustrious fellow-workers in Europe and America—from humble students, from two great princes, etc. Properly to attend to all the kind messages and all our correspondents would have kept the little household hard at work from dawn to dark, while the sick man was left to attend to himself.

At last Dr Wren made eloquent appeal to one of the visitors—let him into the house itself and pleaded for peace. The patient *must* be kept quiet. What could be done to stop all this worry and annoyance? Was there no magic word to be spoken which might bring the trouble to an end?

"Yes," said the visitor. He was the representative of a great news agency. "Give us facts and we'll leave you alone. That's all we want—facts. If people would only give us the facts, we'd always let 'em alone."

Dr Wren and the visitor together framed a reassuring, calming bulletin—if not embodying all the facts, at least omitting all the fiction; and the kind and thoroughly sympathetic visitor promised to give it the widest publicity as something Official, Authorised, and Final.

Then the memoirs went back into the pigeon-holes: they would not be wanted yet awhile. The magic word had been spoken: the bells ceased to sound; hands rarely beat the door; a kindly silence fell around the house upon the cliff.

The good and friendly silence was maintained even when Dr Keeling paid his third visit. Not a line appeared in the public press to chronicle his journey. Once more he declared himself to be well satisfied. The paralysed limbs were all that they should be: he could detect no improper wasting of muscular tissue; the pulse was good; the condition of the heart was excellent—no trouble threatening there. He

was so well satisfied that he would not come again—not for a long time.

Patience and care—everything he had to say might be summed up in those two words. The months must roll by in this stationary stage before one might look for outward indications of improvement. The long months probably must mount into a changeless year before one could hope to see evidence of nature's slow work of reconstruction—some sign of returning sensation, tinglings, ticklings of the feet; the gradual, almost imperceptible remission in the symmetrical paralysis; a contraction, a trembling, now on this side, now of that; then, very slowly, progress; then, at last, cure.

On this third visit, Dr Keeling's abruptness and jerkiness of manner had almost entirely disappeared. Within and without the sick-room, he was almost the same man—black, priestlike, composing: the kind father-confessor who is also the kind family friend. He talked for at least half-an-hour to Mrs Burgoyne and Effie, before he started with Dr Wren to walk back to the railway station.

"No, I sha'n't come again," he said as they strolled down the hill. "He's all right. Wonderful, isn't he? Colossal! You'd *feel* it, wouldn't you—in the first minute, if you hadn't a notion who he was?"

"Yes," said Wren. "I really think one would."

"Something beyond our plummet line? Something to measure and no standard we can use? Above us—above the range of thought of us poor common men? I felt it very strongly—at once. I felt it stronger than ever to-day."

"But, Wren," added Dr Keeling, becoming abrupt, "what the *deuce* is the matter with that woman? You know," and he jerked his head—"Mrs Burgoyne. *What* is it? The girl—what's-her-name, seems devoted to him too—yet she is steady. One *can* calm *her*. But that woman—seems jumpier and jumpier every time I see her. What the deuce is it—nothing but fear of what isn't going to happen?"

Dr Wren could only tell his distinguished *confrère* that

Mrs Burgoyne was habitually a well-balanced organisation: cheerful, peaceful, happy of temperament—not in the least highly strung. But her love of her husband was her life itself—all her life. From girlhood her husband had been all in all to her. This illness had naturally been a shock to her: there had been no warning, nothing to break the shock.

"Oh, is that it, is it?" said Dr Keeling. "Well, I am sure I have told her not to upset herself. One can't do more."

Dr Wren took occasion to speak to Mrs Burgoyne after this, when there was no one present to listen to his words.

"Mrs Burgoyne, don't be alarmed—on my honour, all is going well. I give you my word of honour that if we are careful—and we *will* be very careful—we need not fear. I would not for the world deceive you. I swear to you that I think there is no cause for fear."

When one counted the weeks, it was such a little time—not five weeks gone, and yet already one seemed to be thinking of the dim past when one recalled the days before the illness began.

The new order of things was so completely established that it seemed to be an order of all time. All things had changed, yet nothing now was changing. The narrow circle of home life seemed to have narrowed to the sick-room itself. Here about the sick-bed was the spirit and the atmosphere of home: here, in the narrow circle of their hopes and fears, the inmates of the home seemed bound together closer, far closer than of old. Outside the room, the house looked desolate and strange. The dining-room was always cold and cheerless: a place of silence in which to hurry through the necessary meals without troubling the servants if the fire had been neglected. There was no fire at all in Effie's morning-room. She used the room no more. The deserted workroom was Mr Stone's room now; and

here at least the fire burned strong—far into the night, for now it seemed that Mr Stone would sit and work when all the house was still—would sit and watch the firelight flicker on the empty chair when all was hushed in sleep.

And, as the monotonous days dragged on, the doubt returned—in spite of Dr Wren, in spite of Dr Keeling—to Effie, to Sybil Burgoyne, to Stone. Would the new order of things ever change again to the old? Would he ever fill the empty chair again?

One morning, before Effie had come down to breakfast, Sybil Burgoyne and Stone spoke freely of the doubt.

"You have been with him already, haven't you?" she asked. "What did he want?"

"He told me not to say."

"Does he feel worse?"

"Oh no. It was nothing—nothing about himself."

"Jack, what do you think now? Do *you* believe he will recover?"

"No," said Stone. "I don't believe it now." He had been holding her hand but he let it slip away as if from nerveless fingers, while, watching her face, he whispered his thought. "I believe that he will die—within the year they speak of. . . . I am always thinking of it—except when I am with you. I dream of it every night."

"Jack!"

"He is too old for recovery. All that Wren says is true about this—about what is going on now. But something else will happen. He will die. Sybil, I couldn't think at first. You—you understand. It was too horrible—too like the answer to a secret hope. But now I can think. He will seem to get better. Then, sooner or later, some other trouble will announce itself. This is the first failure in the nervous system—the machine has broken down: it will break again. Or the heart will fail. That's what Keeling watches—the heart. I don't know *what* will happen next, but I am sure now that this is the beginning of the end."

Later on this cold November morning, as soon as she was

alone with her husband, he called her to the bedside. His hands, clasped across his breast, had been holding something hidden beneath the coverlet.

“Sybil. Have you forgotten the day? Sybil, it is the fifteenth of November.”

It was the anniversary of their wedding—the day on which high holiday was always to be kept. For the first time in all the years she had forgotten that the never-to-be-forgotten date was near: for the first time in all the years the surprise was a real surprise.

Stooping over the bed she kissed him on his forehead, and, while she stooped, he hung about her neck the ribbon that carried the glittering surprise itself—the heart of flashing diamonds bought for him by Effie, his secret envoy to the glittering, flashing town.

“Do you like it, dear?”

But for a long time his wife could not speak of the surprise. She had burst into sudden tears. She had sunk upon her knees by the bed; and, hiding her face upon her arms, was sobbing hysterically.

“Oh, why are you so good to me—so much too good to me?”

“Sybil, what is it? Don’t, dear. Don’t.”

His hand was on her bowed head and tenderly he smoothed her dark hair, and patted her trembling shoulders.

“Sybil! What is it, dear? Such a little thing! The only diamonds I would hoard are Sybil’s tears. Don’t give me—diamonds—in exchange for dross. . . . Sybil!”

Sobbing still, she rose from her knees, wiped her eyes, and then, sitting by the bedside, thanked him for the pretty trinket. He held her hand clasped in his hands; and while she praised his gift, the trinket seemed to burn her bosom. It was far too good for her, too splendid, too bright with diamond fire—and, as in a broken voice she thanked him, she thought of Hawthorne’s fable of the woman and the man with the scarlet brands upon their breasts. To-night would she find that these diamonds had burnt her skin?

Yet the chain of the flesh held her. Her love held her in chains of fire. Pity was returning, shame had returned, sadness was returning—that old sadness in the thought of life itself was rolling back, in a measureless flood ; yet still the love held her. Still when the love called her, she must forget all else : must spring from the shadows to the light—must live though all beyond her love should change to death.

Sometimes, sitting by the bed, she would see Effie and Stone walking in the garden. They were going down to the summer-house, where on certain days a fire was lit to keep the room free from damp. They had stopped beneath the bare trees, and they seemed to be talking earnestly. Now they strolled on again, and together mounted the steps and disappeared. While she watched them from the window of the sick-room, she was stung with jealous fear. Is he going from her? Is he letting her slip from his life as he let her hand slip away from him when they stood and whispered of the coming time? Is he turning to youth and innocence?

If he appeared again quickly, her heart leaped in joy. If in a minute Effie were deserted and he came strolling back to the house alone, her heart beat strong and full in fierce instinctive joy. She must watch from the window always when they two passed along the sodden path beneath the leafless trees.

Or again, as she sat by the bedside, looking down into the empty garden, the sadness used to rise from heart to brain. Of a sudden, she would realise the baseness of the bond—the vileness of life itself. All that makes for joy is transient, fleeting : all that builds up pain is strong and will endure. As the sunlight of a summer hour the flame of love will fade ; as the darkness of the grave the end of love is ever near. Instinctively—for a moment—she feels the certainty that he is slipping from her. He will protest, will strain her to his heart, and she will see the love flame kindling in his eyes—the flame that kindles in desire and dies in use. Then she will believe that the flame can never fade—for a little longer she will

struggle to believe. But sooner or later he will tell her with stammering tongue and moody, downcast eyes that all his love is dead. For a moment, by instinct, she feels the certainty of this, and sits and shivers. Staring down at the empty garden, at the sullen clouds and the misty sea, at decay and wreck where once was life and light—staring at the ruin of the golden year, she shivers.

“Sybil, what are you looking at so intently?”

Then she turns with a start.

“Nothing. Shall I read to you?”

On some days he dictated to her now—a very little, very slowly. Then when she had written down his passing thought, he would fold his hands contentedly and she would read aloud—would read in even tones, from one of Mr Hind’s library novels, of honest lovers crossed in love, of guilty wives who masked their guilt for years, of outraged husbands who laughed and throve until they guessed their wrong.

Often it was Effie and not Sybil Burgoyne who sat by the bed and glanced into the garden. Effie seemed never happy away from her uncle’s side. If sometimes in the sick-room her eyes filled with tears when she thought of the empty chair downstairs, she was quick to hide her eyes. It was then that she would look out from the window; and, when she turned again, her face was bright and smiling. Poor uncle must be cheered, not pitied. It was her duty to be gay, and wile away these heavy days for uncle.

“To whom are you waving your hand, Effie?”

“To Aunt Sybil. She is going out, I think.”

“Is your aunt alone, dear?”

“No; Jack’s with her. She is going to Mr Hind’s to change the books.”

“Oh yes. . . . Now, who is it?”

“Only Jack. He is coming back to the house. Silly boy—won’t look up.”

“Has your aunt gone?”

“Yes.”

When Effie was on guard, Aunt Sybil would glide away, through the curtained door that led to her own room. The sick man and his niece were happy in each other's company—Effie with her foolish prattle made the sick man talk and laugh, yet never tired him. While they were together, Sybil Burgoyne in her room close by would cut and roll the long white linen bandages for Dr Wren; or, leaving her room, would carry on the business of the house, talk to Mary, Sarah, and the cook, and give all household orders; or sometimes, as now, would leave the house itself. She could safely leave the house: Effie would not desert her post.

Nearly always Effie brought flowers with her.

"Look, Uncle Richard. Aren't they lovely? I think you ought to be very proud to have such flowers in your own greenhouse at the end of November."

"I am proud."

"They are for you to look at—not to play with. I think you and Jack believe flowers were only made to tear to pieces."

"O Effie, don't say that. I am very fond of flowers."

While she talked, she was arranging the flowers in two stone vases on the table near the window. The room was always tidy, but she loved to move about it and try to make it tidier still. Above all else she loved to make him talk of things that had been in the room as long as he had used it—things that had survived the years and spoke of the far past: the days when he was young. Here on the drawers were the ugly knives, the bolas, and the lazo that he had brought from South America forty-five years ago. Here were the clever water-colour sketches made by Dr Ryan, the man who went with Benecker and Uncle Richard, and who died of fever.

"Yes. He was reckless, Effie. Poor fellow: he was young, Effie. Men laugh at fevers when they are young and strong. Poor Ryan!"

In a corner stood the very cabin-chest that had stood in Uncle Richard's cabin when he sailed from San Francisco to Callao. Solid still, oaken and clamped with brass, it stood in

proud defiance of the years to remind him of the voyage and the storm—the six long days in which the cabin was awash, the galley fire was out, and all their clothes, their beds, their food were soaked in cruel salt water.

"Yes, dear. That was roughing it. We didn't mind. All three of us were young."

"But then—when you saw the sun again, and it was calm," said Effie, prompting—"you dried yourselves and laughed."

"Laughed and drank rum."

"O Uncle!"

"And sang and danced—and whistled for a wind—called the gale back again."

Effie loved to hear of the rough sailors who fished and caught sea-birds, but she did not like to hear of their cruelty when they got a shark on board.

"I know, dear. I'll say no more. It was all the fault of one . . . Effie, I struck him."

"I hope you hurt him, Uncle Richard."

"I fear I did—sorely. I was long and thin and wiry then—not really strong, you know, but wiry. Poor fellow. It was ignorance—stupid hate bred of the ancient fear. A shark is cruel itself. They told me he would wait and use his knife. He never did. Poor fellow—I gave him money, and we parted friends."

She loved to hear him summon up the past—to see his thoughtful smile as memory worked. It seemed as though she took him by the hand and made him walk again—in thought. Behind those far-off days of travel and research his youth stretched gay and light. Here on the walls hung many photographs—such faded prints they were, made when photography itself was young and new: whiskered lads in cap and gown, groups of grinning boys—preposterous dandies who went to playing fields in stove-pipe hats and choked themselves in stocks while rowing for a prize—his Christ Church friends when he and life were young. Sometimes she would take a faded group from the wall and give it to him at his request; and, sitting by his side, learn all the dead men's names.

"Yes, dear. I am there," and he would chuckle. "I'm not surprised you cannot pick me out. *There.*"

"O Uncle Richard. Is that really you?"

"Yes. What a puppy, eh? What fatuous donkeys we all were—they called us *bloods*. That was 'Puffy' Gordon—he could sing a song. Puffy was the drollest little fellow—a mime. They sent him down . . . Bardsley Stoke, Wilmington, Freddy Lane, Parker, Lennox, Gore! And that—that skinny beggar on the left—you ought to know that face."

"*Not Lord Frodsham?*"

"Yes, dear—Tom and no one else. A hatchet-faced rogue—to drink with you, fight with you, ride with you—so obstinate he'd never own when he was beat. Poor dear old Tom!"

And farther still—behind the days of Tom—she loved to lead him back. With her chin resting on her hands, she would gaze at the faces in the ebony frame that hung above the chest of drawers. Here, on three panels, were miniatures—delicate ivory faces, with the soft life tints still blooming, of dead Burgoynes. The lady with the lace upon her head was his mother—her great-grandmother. That was so wonderful to think of. She seemed to be standing with him hand-in-hand and bringing this face to life by mutual love and reverence.

Once he talked to her about memory itself.

"Effie, when you remember things from the past—do the things come as pictures, or in words?"

"How do you mean, Uncle Richard?"

"Well, dear, when you think of some old friend—one of those little girls you used to know when you were a child—Enid Bates, or Grace Gurney—does her portrait come suddenly upon a dark background, or do you think—in words: 'Enid Bates was the girl I knew'?"

Effie knitted her forehead in strenuous consideration.

"Pictures—I *think*. First the pictures. Then I would say the words to myself."

"Yes. You would say to yourself: '*That* is the picture of my friend Enid'—yes. . . . That would be usual. . . . Yes. . . . All the time I was talking, I was seeing such pictures

—the rigging of the ship, those big Pacific waves rolling their oily green beneath a splintered boom—so clearly, Effie."

"How strange!"

"No, dear, not strange. . . . But it makes one feel as though the brain were really a storehouse with cupboards—doesn't it? —with *cupboards*, full of drawers, and every drawer full of pictures—on glass—some fading, some quite fresh—and one could bring them all out—if one tried. When men—have accidents, and memory is gone, it is as if the key of a drawer had been lost. All the pictures are there, but one cannot bring them out."

"But, Uncle Richard, what a wonderful memory you have! I couldn't have remembered it, but there really *were* two girls called Enid Bates and Grace Gurney."

"I know, dear. I have lost no keys as yet. I have been exploring—and all my keys are on the bunch."

In such easy, confidential chat, the heavy hours would glide again as in the happy time before the illness. Once only did it seem that Effie had made him talk too much.

"Uncle Richard. I have tired you. Let me read."

"No, dear."

This afternoon his wife had perhaps left them together for longer than usual. She had more bandages to make. Now Effie saw that he was restless. His face had become for a little while flushed; his hands seemed warm and dry, and he moved them frequently. Effie gave him some soda-water to drink. Then he folded his hands again; the flush faded; and he lay silent, looking with half-closed eyes at the curtained doorway.

"Effie. See if your aunt is in her room."

And Effie opened the curtained door and looked into the other room.

"No. She must have gone down. Shall I fetch her?"

"No," said the sick man thoughtfully. "But go downstairs and see where she is—will you, dear? Give her that book," and he pointed to one of Mr Hind's novels.

And Effie went upon her errand, and returned.

"Well? Where was she?"

"In the workroom."

"Alone there?"

"No—talking to Jack about something. She is coming up at once."

And, almost immediately, Mrs Burgoyne, with the book in her hand, came into the room.

"Have you really finished this?" she asked.

"Well, no. I have glanced at the end. It may go back now."

"Shall I read to you? Shall I begin this other one?"

"No thank you, Sybil, I would rather rest. I have been thinking to-day—nearly all day."

In the dusk of a December afternoon, the lovers were once more whispering of death. About the shadowy house they moved like shadows in this twilight hour. He had been lurking, waiting, listening as the darkness fell, and now she came to him and wept.

"Dr Wren says he is still sure all is going well. He will ask Dr Keeling to come again, if I wish it. Jack, what do you believe now?"

"I believe that he will never recover."

Then she wept in pity. Pity, contrition, and shame opened the fountain of the scalding tears, even with her lover's arms about her waist.

"I—I don't want him to die. It would be too horrible," and she sobbed and shivered in his arms.

Yet the chain held—the fiery bond of the flesh held her.

"Sybil. What shall I do—what can I do?"

"Nothing—it is too horrible."

"Sybil. Shall I go away? If—if it is my being here still that makes you think—makes you so unhappy—shall I go away?"

"No. Don't leave me—don't leave me."

"Then don't think of it. You—you mustn't think of it"; and, as he drew her closer to him, making her lift her head,

making her see his eyes with the love-light kindling in the shadows, she ceased to sob, she ceased to think.

“Don’t leave me, Jack—don’t leave me.”

Late at night, when she stands in the curtained doorway and looks towards the bed, the tears are often in her eyes. He is sleeping peacefully—with hands clasped as in prayer. There is light from the hearth and from the shaded night-light, but beyond the bed, the room is dark—dark as a vault. Motionless he lies as a stone knight—noble and splendid now in marble after the noble life is done: the white crusader sleeping for ever on the white tomb. With this image in her mind, as she stands in the shadow watching him, her heart melts in pity and remorse.

Yet the chain holds fast—holds her in the bondage of her shameful love.

XXI

IT was the middle of the night. All the house, all the world was hushed in sleep. Through the curtained windows of the workroom came now and then the sound of movement—the night wind sweeping by, leafless branches swinging, a faint patter of rain upon glass. In the silence of the big room one could hear very plainly the crackle of the fire as the red coals burned and broke—like the breath of a sleeping man. One could hear the ticking of the clock on the stairs—like the heart of the house itself beating slow in sleep.

There was a lighted candle on the ledge of a bookshelf, and, shielded by the wing of an opened screen, it threw upon the ceiling a pale circle of light with a centre of smoky shadow. The screen had been arranged to guard the light and guide it, and all beyond its narrowed power the shadows held the room, wrapping it round about with heavy veils to hide its secrets. Only when the red coals broke and a breath of flame sounded from the hearth, the shadow curtains rose and fell across the walls of books; and for a moment firelight flickered redly on the empty chair, the leather couch, the lovers locked in each other's arms. Then again the darkness dropped its veils to hide this shameful secret of the night.

“Let me go now.” Her voice was no louder than the breath of the fire as the red coals broke. “Let me go now. I am afraid.”

“Don’t be afraid.”

“Jack!” She was whispering again after a long silence. “I must go back now. Let me go now. He might wake. He might call to me—he might wake, and if I didn’t answer when he called——”

“Why should he wake? He will not wake.”

Then once more all the room, all the house, all the world seemed to sink into the hushed depths of dreamless sleep.

"Listen! What was that?" She had slipped from his embrace and was straining ears to catch again the sound that had startled her.

"Nothing," he whispered presently. "Sometimes the creeper is blown upon the glass and drags across the sash. I think I heard it."

"Are you sure? . . . Jack. I thought at first it was a footstep on the stairs."

But within and without the house not a sound could be caught now by their straining ears, except the ticking of the clock, the light patter of the rain, and cinders dropping from the grate.

"Nothing," he whispered.

"Listen now."

The sound had come again. Something moving—within the house. Something moving on the stairs: then, once more, silence.

"Jack, it is someone on the stairs——"

They had risen from the couch and drawn towards the wall within the circle of the candlelight; and now, as she clung to his arm and whispered, her eyes were full of sudden fear.

"Jack, what shall I do?" and the whisper was shaken as her breath came faster. "I daren't go back now. It is someone on the stairs—waiting there. Someone who suspects. Who? One of the servants? Jack—not Effie?"

What could they do? He too was breathing fast as he thought of this danger. The sound had been a footstep—he had no doubt now; and the sound had ceased. What could that mean but someone waiting, watching in the darkness on the stairs? Rapidly his thought worked. What could they do?

Then he whispered his thought. She must go into the small bookrooms that led from the workroom to the passage near the kitchen, and wait there in the second room with the passage door ajar, and be ready to steal away when the chance came. Then he could open the workroom door and

go boldly out, carrying the light, and face the sentinel on the stairs.

"Is the door bolted?" and her frightened eyes turned towards the workroom door.

"Yes. I must undo it," and again he whispered his rapid thoughts. If someone was on the watch, the watcher must be dealt with at once. No time must be given for the watcher to come down and try the handle of the bolted door. As soon as she was hidden in the small room he must unbolt the door and go out boldly, make the watcher think he had nothing to conceal—had been working through the night alone in the big room. He would leave the door open, so that the watcher might come down later if she wished to examine the empty room.

"Do you understand? You must wait in there—until you feel certain it is safe. Give her time then—whoever it is. Then you must go out through the passage and up by the servants' stairs. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Then if you meet anyone—then. Say you came down for something for him—some more milk—soda-water. Don't be afraid. I shall go out noisily as if I didn't mind who heard. You understand?"

"Yes"—and her hand upon his arm shook. "I understand."

"Now I must make sure that you can get out to the passage. Don't move till I come back."

Then cautiously he took the lighted candle, softly crossed the room, softly unlocked the door that opened to the smaller rooms, and went to make his investigation.

While she stood motionless, waiting for him to return, fear for a moment laid an icy hand upon her heart. A sudden unreasoning terror of impossible things made her tremble for a moment. It was gone in a moment and she could think again of ugly common facts. A servant lurking in the darkness to discover the wrong done to the honoured master of the house? Mary, Sarah—which? One of these faithful

servants who has guessed the ugly truth—the outrage to the loved master. As she thought of it the blood beat in her temples and hot shame filled her brain. No fancy now—but imminent, pressing danger of exposure and disgrace.

Then he came softly back. His face in the candlelight seemed white as hers, and his hand plainly trembled as he set the candle down upon his desk and stood listening in the middle of the room. Then he came softly to her and whispered in her ear.

“You can’t get out that way. They—they have locked the door on the outside. The key is on the other side.”

Clinging to him she stared across at the dark entry of the smaller rooms. What could they do? They were trapped. How could she escape the watcher on the stairs—the motionless sentinel who was waiting in the darkness? And again the cold hand of panic fear clutched her heart.

“I think,” he whispered, “you had better go in there—even though you can’t get out. . . . I must go up and see who it is. . . . She’ll go back when I come. . . . What do you think? . . . Perhaps, after all, there is no one there.”

“Listen. . . . My God, what’s that?”

It was the sound again. A footstep on the stairs—something moving slowly, dragging, shuffling, nearer than before; then the silence unbroken again; and no sound but their own heart-beats coming thick and fast in fear of impossible things.

“Impossible,” he whispered hoarsely.

Between the couch and the wall of books there was a space of five or six feet. Now, clinging to him, she shrank back to the wall, and cowering, stared across the couch at the bolted door. Her black hair, tumbling loose about her shoulders, hung nearly to her waist; with a shaking hand she clutched at her loose wrapper where it lay open at her throat; and her white face in the midst of the dark hair for a moment looked like a staring, senseless mask. In the sudden access of her almost unreasoning fear, she seemed now but to have one thought—to shrink away from the door till the wall of books stopped her.

"Impossible," he whispered again.

Yet for a moment, as he listened to the sound of the shuffling footsteps, he too had believed in the impossible thing—had believed that a miracle was happening: that the paralysed man had risen from his bed.

That would be indeed impossible. A miracle—and there are no miracles. Yet as he stood motionless, listening, fear seemed to flow from her twitching hand; her clutching fingers seemed to send a throb of superstitious fear into his blood, breaking the sequence of his hurried thought. Could it be possible? Could mind thus triumph over matter? This man is not as other men. Wren, Keeling—he himself has said so. Who could measure the power of such a mind as that? He has been lying awake wondering; has called to his wife; has begun to *think*. And with such thought as his, when once his thought is working, has come the certain divination of the truth. Then the vast brain has issued its command, has generated the nerve force, has flashed the commanding message of the mighty will, and Nature herself must needs obey. Nature's laws are broken by such power as that. The paralysed man has slowly risen from his bed; by superhuman effort is creeping, dragging himself through the darkness of the house to confront them in their guilt.

In truth only a few minutes had elapsed since their first alarm—since the first sound of the footstep, yet already it seemed to both that hours had gone by while they had whispered, schemed an escape, and again stood listening.

Now once more the footsteps sounded—slow, shuffling, dragging—most horrible to hear as one thought of the effort that had moved those heavy, lifeless limbs.

The miracle had happened—no one listening to the footsteps now could doubt the miracle.

"Jack. Save me. Don't let him come in—don't let him find me here."

But to save her was impossible.

"Go in there," and he pointed to the dark entry of the smaller room.

"No, no." To her it seemed some inner trap, more dreadful than the larger trap in which she stood. She could not go into that black vault and wait till the dragging footsteps followed her into the darkness.

"Yes. Sybil, let go my hand. Hide in there. Then I'll open the door and go out—go out to him—and stop him coming farther."

But she clung to him and would not loose his hand.

"No, no. For God's sake don't put out the light."

Livid and shaking, she clung to him and crouched down by the wall.

The miracle had happened. It was the colossal will working the miracle—and the thought froze her blood. It was as though a dead man had risen, as though the monstrous wickedness of their crime had cried aloud in the silence of the night and brought the dead men from their graves.

"Sybil, do as I tell you." He too was trembling, staring at the door. Unreasoning fear flowed from her: the clutching hands upon his arm sent the cold fear to his heart. "Sybil. Don't—don't be afraid. Go into the other room—I—I'll go and speak to him. I'll come back and let you out by the passage door."

But she scarcely heard him. Nothing could save her now. How could they have hoped to deceive *him*? He was coming to denounce her; and in thought, as she listened, staring at the bolted door, she could see him, white, majestic, awful—the recumbent figure with the clasped hands that has risen in the darkness and is coming through the darkness to the door. Her face is a staring mask, wide-eyed, open-mouthed as she clings and crouches, listening, waiting, shaking in every limb.

The white statue has moved from the white tomb. The marble knight has stepped from his marble bed, and is pacing the cathedral aisle. She can hear his heavy footfall—the dragging, shuffling footfall of the man whose feet are stone. Nearer, nearer still. The man of stone is coming through the darkness to the door.

Thus she thought, crouching lower still, shaking in unreasoning terror.

Now his hands were groping in the darkness upon the door itself. The heavy feet had stopped. In the darkness he was leaning against the upper panels while his fingers groped for the handle, and she heard his laboured breathing. Then the handle turned and was violently shaken ; his weight was thrown upon the panels with a thud as of stone ; the bolt plate burst from the wall : as a stone man might have crashed through the door, he came lurching, swaying into the room and stood before them.

He was white from head to foot, gaunt and terrible, swathed in wool, bound in white linen—a statue that had come to life, a dead man who had risen from the grave. His eyes were upon her now, and as he advanced he pointed with outstretched hand at his cowering wife—at guilt personified crouching down by her lover's knees against the wall of books.

Then, just as he reached the couch, he tried to speak. His voice came hoarse and thick—horrible vocal sounds, not words. Then there was a low, gasping cry, and at the same moment his arm sank as though it had been slowly pulled down by some unseen person ; and, staggering forward, he fell face downwards across the couch.

All the house, all the world seemed sleeping. From without came the sound of the branches swaying in the wind, the faint rattle of the rain upon the glass ; from within, no sound but the ticking of the clock on the stairs, the stertorous breathing of the unconscious man, and the gasping sobs of the miserable woman who knelt by the couch and watched the half-open yet unseeing eyes. Not a movement broke the silence on the upper floor, as Stone brought a lighted candle to the head of the stairs and placed it on the table by the clock. No one had heard what to them had seemed a rending crash of noise as the bolt of the door was broken, or that horrible inarticulate cry, or the reverberating thud of the fall upon the leather couch. All the house was hushed in sleep, as Stone

put another candle outside the open door of the workroom and again listened. The minutes were creeping by, but no one had awakened yet.

"Sybil," and he laid his hand on her shoulder. "Stop crying. You must help me now."

"Is he dying? Is he dying?" She spoke without looking round. Her eyes never left the expressionless face. She was holding a cold, limp hand, and chafing it with her trembling fingers.

"No, he is not dying."

"Have you roused them? Are they coming?"

All her fear had gone, but horror remained. A stupor of grief, a dull agony of remorse had taken possession of her brain, numbing her senses, making her voice cold and lifeless. She had obeyed him in all that he had told her to do: had aided him as he turned the stricken form upon the couch, put a pillow under the head, and lifted the heavy legs. Then she had sunk upon her knees and taken her husband's hand and begun to sob spasmodically.

"Sybil. Do you hear me? You must stop crying. You must help me."

His face was white; but outwardly he was calm and collected now. He spoke as a doctor speaks to a hospital nurse who has suddenly become hysterical at a bedside—giving orders, not craving aid.

"We must carry him upstairs. Do you hear? You must help me to carry him up."

"No, we can't do it. Why haven't you called the others?"

But she had obeyed him by ceasing to sob.

"The others must not know what has happened. They must not see him down here. They must not see you"; and with his arm round her waist he forced her to get up.

"What does it matter?" Her eyes were still fixed upon her husband's face. "I don't care who sees me—who knows. Let them know what we have done. Call them."

"Sybil," and he took her by the shoulders and turned her to him, speaking now almost fiercely. "Do what I tell you.

There is time now—but at any moment they may wake. Then they would hear us."

"I can't do it. Call the others. I—I believe it is wrong to move him."

"No. We can't hurt him. He must be taken back to bed. Wren would say so."

"Fetch Dr Wren. Why haven't you gone for him?"

"I am going directly. But Wren must not know—Wren will not know. I tell you, we can do it—Wren and I carried him easily. Now. Do what I tell you."

Then she obeyed him.

"Now. Put your arm below his knees. Now."

Staggering, shuffling—as though making echoes of the heavy footsteps that had sounded a quarter of an hour ago—they carried him along the passage, out into the hall.

Then, after a listening pause, it seemed to them that all the house was full of sounds, as, dragging, shuffling, stumbling, they carried him up the stairs. Boards cracking and groaning sounded like pistol shots and thunder in their ears. Twice on the stairs she tripped and sank upon her knees, as if crushed to the earth by the weight of marble limbs. They were both gasping, breathless. His heart was bursting; blood drummed in his veins, as he staggered and strained beneath the burden of the noble head, the hanging arms, the massive rigid trunk. It seemed that all the world must hear them labouring to conceal their shameful secret. It seemed that as their toil increased, unreasoning fear was again driving them; that they were careless now—not trying to do their task noiselessly, seeking only to get the task accomplished. Yet no one woke; the house was silent as the grave when at last they lifted him upon his bed and, breathless, panting, stood and listened by the bedroom door.

Then, coming back to the bed, Stone stooped over the recumbent figure.

"Is he dying: is he dying now?"

"No. He is not dying. He will not die—now."

His hands were trembling; his muscles ached and burned;

his pale face was streaming with perspiration. With a shaking hand he brought out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. Then stooping again, he rearranged the bandages about the legs, carefully examined the limp hands, pulled open the white woollen shirt and looked at the neck and the shoulders, drew back the white hair from the brow and scrutinised the temples. There were no telltale marks. Not a contusion, not a scratch to tell of the fall. Wren would never guess. Then he rearranged the bedclothes, put all in order, reconstituted the picture of a paralysed man lying on his back, immovable as a statue. Thus the doctor had last seen the patient. Now let the doctor come.

"Now." He had poured out some cold water, and made her bathe her face. "Now, listen to me. Go into your room. Put on a dress. Do up your hair. And then go and call Mary—or one of them. Don't wake Effie—if you can help it. Let us keep her away as long as we can. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Now I will fetch Wren. This is what I shall tell him. You came and called me. You said you thought there was something wrong with him—you were frightened. And you told me to go to Wren and bring him as fast as possible. I shall say that I went at once. I did not come in here. I have not seen him yet. I have no idea what is the matter—whether there is really anything wrong or not. Do you understand?"

While he spoke he was looking at the bed. When he stopped speaking he listened to the deep breathing : heavy and slow, with now and then a faint rattle in the throat. It was the coma of apoplexy—he had seen it perhaps a hundred times ; yet suddenly, as he watched the half-open eyes, again unreasoning fear broke his thought. Was it really unconsciousness ? Were the eyes unseeing ?

Softly he drew her away to the door of the room and repeated his direction.

"You are sure you understand? . . . That is what I shall tell Wren. He will ask you questions. You are to say, that he has been exactly as he is now since you came into the

room. It was his heavy breathing that alarmed you—and made you send for Wren. Then, though he seemed half awake, you could not rouse him—he would not answer you, and you became more and more frightened and called the others. Now. Be quick now. Go and put on your dress and do your hair. Then call them at once."

Lights streamed from the windows, all the house was astir when Stone came hurrying back with Dr Wren.

In the sick-room there was a group about the bed—the mistress of the house, Effie, the two old servants, Mary and Sarah, turning anxious, scared faces as the doctor entered the room.

"Bring that lamp," said Dr Wren, "and hold it there, please—lower."

He had sent Effie and the maids from the room, and Stone was assisting him in his examination.

"That's right. Raise the shade. Get the light full on his face."

The patient was lying on his back with his arms beneath the bedclothes. The face was pallid, and wet with perspiration. One cheek seemed to puff out very slightly with each laboured breath, and on this side of the face the lower lip seemed to be drawn down. The eyes that Dr Wren was examining so carefully, were now wide open, looking straight forward in the lamplight, unclouded, never blinking. There was no gleam of purpose in their steady, unblinking stare; but to Stone, holding the lamp above the bed, it seemed that there was the same look in the eyes now as there had been an hour and a half ago, before the seizure—a look of superhuman pride, of superhuman scorn.

"Put the lamp down," and regret sounded deep and true in Wren's low voice. "A cerebral lesion . . . Hæmorrhage. Quite—quite unexpected by me, Mrs Burgoyne. Nothing of this character anticipated by Keeling or myself. But I fear there is no doubt." As he spoke, he had lifted and felt the right arm; and now very gently he let it fall upon the bed. "Right hemiplegia. No doubt at all, I fear."

Then, after removing a pillow in order to bring the head lower, he asked Sybil Burgoyne the questions for which Stone had prepared her.

"Was he all right when you went to bed?"

"Yes."

"You noticed nothing unusual?"

"Nothing at all."

"He didn't appear restless—or in any way uneasy?"

"No."

"Was he asleep when you left him?"

"Yes."

"Sleeping quietly—not breathing as he is now?"

"Oh no."

"But," asked Wren, "before you went to him again, did he cry out?"

"No."

"Did you hear nothing—a cry, a moan, anything to make you go to him?"

"No—I heard nothing, but I was frightened——"

"Had you just awakened?"

"No. I was not asleep."

"I thought that perhaps he had given a cry, and that had really awakened you—although you might not have known. But that could not have been if you were awake. . . . But, Mrs Burgoyne—let us think. Had you not been asleep at all? Had you been lying awake ever since you went to bed?"

"No. I think I slept at first perhaps—but I had been awake some time—a long time—before I went in to him."

"Your door was open, of course?"

"Yes."

"I think he must have made some sound."

Stone, standing at the bottom of the bed, had not looked at her while she answered the questions. He was watching the open staring eyes as though fascinated by their steady unseeing scrutiny. Looking at them now he spoke stammeringly.

"Wren, is—is he still—unconscious?"

Dr Wren, turning his head, answered in surprise, almost with contempt.

"Don't you *know* he is unconscious?" and for a moment contempt showed in his face as in his voice.

Could it be possible that this young man had really thought he could ever attain the highest success in the healer's art? What could cleverness avail when linked with such weakness? Here at a bedside he was livid, stammering, shaking, because the sufferer was his friend. For a moment Wren felt nothing but contempt. But then a kinder thought came. How strong must be his affection thus to banish all trace of the doctor and leave only the useless, helpless sympathiser!

"Mrs Burgoyne, you know what I told you"—Dr Wren was wiping the perspiration from the patient's brow—"that we had no cause for apprehension. Well, on my honour, I believed that there was no cause—Keeling believed it. The thing is almost inexplicable—on my honour, no one could have foreseen it."

And again he asked her questions.

"You are sure that he was just like this—I mean in exactly this position when you first came in?"

"Yes."

"There was nothing to suggest that he had made some violent movement—an effort to turn himself on his side?"

"No."

"The pillows were not out of position—the blankets were not thrown off his chest?"

"No."

"I cannot understand it. One would look for evidence of strain or movement. . . . This is what I think must have happened. He made some violent effort in his sleep. He was dreaming—some troubled dream perhaps, and under the impetus of the dream-thought he struggled to move. In the dream—or just waking from it, he raised himself with his arms, tried to sit up. In the dream, or before he was thoroughly awake and able to remember his condition,

he made some most unhappy efforts. But then I think he would have made some noise—even an outcry. I think, in fact, he did make some such sound, and that was what woke you—what frightened you while you slept. Why should you be frightened—otherwise? He was all right when you left him. But roused from your sleep by some unusual sound, you would wake with a sense of alarm. I think that is what must have happened. . . . If, as I believe, there is haemorrhage into the brain, I think that Keeling will agree that some quite unusual strain upon the vessels must have caused it."

While he talked thus in tones of deepest sympathy to Mrs Burgoyne, Stone suddenly left the bedside and hurried from the room.

He had forgotten the broken bolt of the workroom door. Wren would come down to the workroom, would see the broken door, would ask for the meaning of the broken door—would never cease from questioning till this mystery of the night was pierced. Already perhaps the servants had been looking at the door, wondering, chattering, filling the house with a whisper of suspicion. What could he say? How should he explain—how provide an answer?

He hurried through the waiting group in the corridor, found some stammering words of hope for Effie, and hurried down the stairs. All was dark in the passage to the workroom, and in the room itself. Fate was helping him still. No one had been to the workroom yet. Love and dread had held them all on the upper floor waiting for the doctor's verdict. Fate had been kind to him: was helping him in spite of himself. Before going for Wren, he had remembered to fetch the lighted candle from the chair outside the workroom. He had remembered to do this, yet, in his agitation, he had forgotten the broken bolt. Fate had been very kind to him.

Now, lighting a candle, he did what he should have done two hours ago. The bolt socket had been torn from the wall till the bolt was free and then left hanging by a single

screw. First he tried if he could put it back into position; but this was not possible. Replaced, it hung loosely in the splintered screw-holes: as soon as the door was shut or opened it would tumble out and hang by the one firm screw. All the world would see that it had been smashed. Then he wrenched it from the wall, and, with the screws and fragments of wood that carefully he picked up from the floor, he put it away in a drawer of the window cupboard. He must tell the servants that, noticing it was loose, he had taken it off to keep safe till the next time a carpenter was working at the Lodge. The bolt itself and its fastenings on the door were scarcely injured. Cautiously he drove the bolt back in its groove. Then he tested the door handles and found them loose but not broken from the haft.

It seemed that Fate had been very kind to them. The long night was dragging through, holding its secrets fast, only showing its shameful mystery to glassy, unseeing eyes, obliterating its ugly visions with blood, breaking with a fountain of blood the magic mirror in which its scene of guilt might again have been reflected, changing the tongue that could have told its shame into a tongue of lead.

XXII

BY nine o'clock in the morning consciousness had returned. He had begun to cough ; the rattle in the breath was heard no more : the reflexes were again establishing themselves ; any obstruction in the throat was able now to summon the cough to clear it away. Then there was a movement—the left arm and hand were moving restlessly. Then the eyelids fluttered and dropped, and, when again they lifted, the eyes were moving.

Consciousness was restored, but there was complete aphasia. He made one attempt to speak, but seemed at once to understand his failure. To his wife, who listened with averted head, it was horrible to hear—a strange voice, not his, thick and slow, running the meaningless word forms into a sluggish stream of trouble and distress. Thenceforth he lay silent—or any vocal sounds that he emitted were plainly not purposive. He lay with open eyes that were quite unclouded—and with his eyes he followed people moving about the room, attentively, with anxious interest, as though they were all strangers, whom he had never seen before. He made no slightest sign that he recognised Wren or the others.

In the house and all around it, the shadows seemed to deepen. The long nights had swept their dark veils across the daylight hours. Pale sunlight sending cold and feeble rays into empty rooms ; then the grey clouds again ; then swiftly falling dusk, and once more night. All about the house was strange, unreal. The room from which the kindly voice had gone, now spread its silence : while he lay mute, no voices must be heard.

The room itself had passed into alien hands : by day and night the nurses guarded it. When the door moved, a strange

face was seen. Hirselings with warning finger and a grave reproof, turned Effie from the door, and almost drove her mad by whispered words of doom. There was no one to comfort her: no one to give her hope except George Wren; and to Wren she must not speak—all Wren's thought, his strength, and force must be preserved for Uncle.

Her sweetheart might have eased the burden of her grief, but he was busy all day long, writing letters, aiding Dr Wren, attending upon the great London doctors—giving them food, getting them cabs, escorting them from the station and taking them back to it. Jack must not be disturbed. Sybil Burgoyne, permitted by the stern nurses to go in and out of the silent room, scarcely showed herself to anyone but the servants. The servants were working so hard to provide meals for the nurses and to satisfy all their requirements, that one could not crave companionship of them. Thus, in these dark days, it seemed that Effie stood suddenly alone with none to soothe her aching heart, or support her with sympathy in her dread and sorrow. It seemed that she had passed out of the thoughts of all the household. She was alone, wandering desolately in the shadowy garden while the doctors talked together in the work-room, or alone in the deepening shadows of her own room, kneeling by her bed, sobbing while she prayed to her omnipotent anthropomorphic God, the maker of miracles, beseeching mercy for the thing she loved.

From the outer world again came hundreds of letters and telegrams to be laid on the workroom table, to be answered by the faithful secretary. All the world seemed watching, waiting for words of hope from the lighthouse by the southern sea. All the world seemed thinking of Tyndall's symbolic phrase. Was the flame, which through the darkness of so many years had shed its steady radiance, now dying down? In every house of thought, some thinker waited for tidings from the silent house above the southern sea. It seemed that all the doctors in England, in Europe, would have hurried now to the silent room, if Wren had telegraphed permission. But indeed Wren wanted no more doctors.

Early on the first day Dr Keeling had come down with Mr Grenville. Late on the second day he arrived with Sir Allen Marriott and Sir James Bowers. On the third day he brought Mr Grenville again, and with him, perhaps the biggest man of all—Sir Frederick Grange. Truly they needed no more doctors.

The newspaper men were busy now. They seemed to glory in the famous names : each bulletin inspired them, made the skilled pens run fast and strong. “Richard Burgoyne is once more lying between life and death in his princely country house at Whitebridge. A single glance at the names of the physicians in attendance must satisfy the most fastidious that all which the highest medical science can achieve will be combined in a supreme effort to save the aged philosopher. But it must be owned that nature has ordained limits even to the amazing powers of modern science. At Mr Burgoyne’s advanced age, it is idle to look for that recuperative energy which might be displayed in a younger man,” etc. Or again : “Little hope can be entertained of a successful issue. It will be remembered that this autumn a well-intentioned effort was made in many quarters to minimise the gravity of Mr Burgoyne’s condition. But our readers may also remember that we found ourselves unable to share this view. We publish to-day a bulletin signed by names that are known throughout the length and breadth of the land, which unhappily, if read between the lines, only too clearly proves the correctness of our earliest anticipations.”

Then would come the bulletin.

“Mr Burgoyne’s condition remains unchanged. Signed : Isaac Keeling, Edward Grenville, George Wren.”

Even Wren was famous now, or accepted as famous by the newspapers when they met him in such fine company.

“The genuine regret,” said one of our correspondents, “that can be seen in every face one encounters in the little fishing village, is very touching. Here it is not the great man, the world-famous philosopher, who lies sick unto death : it is the respected neighbour, the kind friend with the

ever-open purse, the ever-ready sympathy for all who knew him. It is quite erroneous to speak of Mr Burgoyne's home as a mansion, or in anywise a princely retreat. In fact it is a comfortable, old-fashioned house—suggesting the country rectory rather than the magnate's villa—standing in pleasant sheltered grounds of quite modest extent. It is but a stone's throw from the white gate on the road to the house itself. Clustered about the gate one may see at all hours of the day a knot of humble friends—rough fisher-folk, labourers from the fields, men, women, and little children. Affixed to the gate is a written notice, requesting the public to refrain from penetrating farther, and such is the loyal regard and courteous consideration of these poor villagers (admired, it would seem, but not imitated by our correspondent) that none will pass this paper barrier. Patiently they wait for the passage of the doctors. When these appear, returning from the house, all eyes seek to read in manner, port, or gesture, some happy augury. But, alas, these famous London doctors cannot give what all desire. There is still no good news for the little crowd of humble friends. The doctors pass out, sombre of mien, sad and solemn," etc., etc.

Truly, within or without the house, these great physicians and surgeons were giving little hope.

On the first day, there had been grave doubt as to the nature of the trouble. The diagnosis was by no means clear, as between haemorrhage and vascular occlusion. Mr Grenville was of opinion that it was an embolism—that a clot had passed from the heart to the brain. He based his opinion on the state of the patient at the moment, and, as Wren thought, without sufficient consideration of anterior states and circumstances. The condition of the heart was all against Mr Grenville. There was no evidence of disease in the cardiac valves. Keeling was assured of this. It was naturally of the utmost importance to clear up the diagnosis, since in the two cases the treatment must differ materially.

But all three men were agreed that, whatever the mechanical injury had been, the brain shock was dangerously severe to

account for the mental disturbance—as manifested by the inability to recognise familiar faces, etc. All three also considered the continued speechlessness of grave import.

Late that night the unilateral symptoms were abating. Power was returning to the right arm. The paralysis was scarcely perceptible above the shoulder, except in some still apparent flatness, or want of expression on the right side of the face. But the aphasia remained absolute and complete.

Next day, all were in accord. It was a haemorrhage. And henceforth, day by day, the debate was only upon the regional diagnosis—to locate the focus of the haemorrhage and trace the extent of the lesion. Really there was nothing else they could talk of. Really there was nothing else they could do—except talk. They could but keep the patient quiet and trust that the mischief had stopped: that no further haemorrhage would announce itself.

Naturally the loss of speech restricted the possible area; and, as they talked, they were busy now in marking narrowest bounds, naming the lacerated fibres, almost numbering the tiny threads and cells that the gushing blood had torn and bulged. As they talked thus of the situation of the ruptured vessel, the learned, horrible, technical terms filled the air—the Rolandic area, Broca's convolution, the lenticular nucleus, the middle cerebral, etc., etc.; and Stone, standing by the table, studying the solemn faces or furtively glancing at the wall where his brain maps hung, was dazed by the voices, while he strove to pierce the cloud of words and seize the truth, while he struggled to think for himself as he had been able to think before his treason had begun.

As he sat at the big table, answering letters, copying Wren's notes and directions, it seemed to him that all sequence in his thoughts was broken, that the sequence of time itself had gone, that in his own narrow brain, some mischief was sympathetically working with the mischief in the vast brain upstairs. If memory had been stolen there, he himself had been robbed of all volition. The house held him: he could not leave it: he was a prisoner in the hands of Fate.

Thus through the days he waited, without thought, except for a little while, without fear—in a long sleepless waiting pause, till Fate should deal with him again. Was it on the fourth or the fifth day that his thought once more was active, that he was able again to consider plans and, with a decision, face all consequences? He did not know. But one day the loud voice of a new-comer seemed suddenly to move his torpid will; and, while the man spoke, he decided on his course of action.

It was Sir Robert Denton, author of many books, president of one of the Royal Colleges, old now, but still a trusted, if a somewhat truculent authority. He was gentle as a woman really, simple and kind as a child, but his voice was loud and grating, his manner overbearing—a lion-hearted, noble old fellow, who seemed to strangers no better than a callous ruffian. Now, in the workroom, he waved his arms, stamped to and fro, and harangued Keeling and Wren, as though they had been students and he had been pacing the platform of a lecture-room.

“Ye may call your hæmorrhage number one—for there’s number two, three, and four to follow—if he lasts so long. If y’ever get him on his legs again, ye’ll have it again—and again. Ye’ll have it while he lies there”—and he waved his arm above his head—“if he lies there long enough.”

Then, as he paced the room, he came to Stone’s hanging sheets as though they had been put there to assist him in the exposition of his gloomy prognosis.

“Why, what’s these? My faith, that’s a mighty fine production,” and roughly he unfolded the ugly pictures. “It’s strange to find such productions in the man’s own house. . . . Ye could say, Keeling, he had guessed what was coming to him. If ye think of it—there’s no man ever lived, better able to comprehend the meaning of the broken bond between his intellect and his poor old body. . . . Ah! The very thing. Come here, will ye now, and hold it,” and he beckoned to Stone.

He had exposed that most dreadful picture of the sectioned brain of No. 4561. Madrid.

"There!" and with his finger, he swept round the area of destruction. "Look here," and he opened his hand. "Whoosh! There's your haemorrhage. Next time it may be here. Whish! Or there—whish! I am as sure as if I were seeing the thing happen with my own eyes."

While Sir Robert was being helped into his fur coat by Dr Wren in the hall, Dr Isaac Keeling came back to the work-room, and with jerky abruptness talked to Stone.

"I say. Don't you think you could shove those things—out of sight somewhere? He'll be here again—in a few days—and they'll only set him off again," and Dr Keeling smiled. "You don't know Sir Robert—jaw, jaw, jaw. But I say—he's all right, you know. He's quite as sorry as we are."

Mr Stone promised to remove the maps.

"Just as well," said Dr Keeling; and going, he turned again.

"I say. I wasn't thinking of him really. He's a tip-topper and I don't mind his jaw. I was thinking of Mrs Burgoyne—and the young lady. If they saw those infernal things—now—don't you know. Must be painful, you know. Good-morning."

Stone, as he brought down the big sheets and rolled them on the floor, was thinking. The loud grating voice had roused him. Now he could think again. Presently he went out into the passage towards the servants' quarters and called for one of the maids.

"Mary—Sarah—is anyone there? . . . I want a duster, please."

It was old Mary who came—the grey-haired, faithful old servant, who with loving hands had nursed her loved master till the trained nurses came to snatch him from her care. Now she was the servant of these stern and unloving guardians, who demanded unceasing service, who grumbled if their food was cold, and talked to her of death while they sipped their claret or greedily powdered their oranges with sugar.

Grey old Mary looked up into Stone's face with piteous intentness as she dusted the maps.

"He hasn't spoke, sir—not a word yet, has he, sir?"

"No, Mary. He hasn't spoken yet. . . . Oh, by-the-by,"—and he pointed to the workroom door—"that bolt wants attention. I found a part of it was quite loose so I pulled it off and put it away," and he pointed to the window cupboard. "I thought you'd notice, so I told you—but I doubt if, after all, it is worth while getting it mended."

"I hadn't noticed, sir—but Susan—she did one morning, and she said it was missing off the wall. I'll ask Jenkinson to fix it again."

She had not wondered even: she was quite without suspicion.

"No, don't trouble, Mary. You see, the bolt was never used—no one will ever want to bolt the door."

"I have known the master, sir, bolt the door—like when he was doing something extra particular with his flowers."

"It isn't worth troubling about," said Mr Stone.

And Mary, dusting the maps, looked up again most piteously, but did not ask the question in her mind. Had he meant that they need not repair the bolt because the master would never again use the room?

Stone carried up the two rolls formed by the maps, and deposited them once more in the dusty lumber-room on the top floor. The maps had served their purpose. They would never be wanted again. Then, in his own room, close by on this upper floor, he sat thinking. On a table, there was a pile of text-books that he had been reading night after night—amongst the heavy volumes, a work by Sir Robert Denton that contained such chapters as *Disconnection of Centres*; *Temporary and Permanent Speech defects*; *Extinction of Memory from traumatic, degenerative, toxic, and other causes*. Sir Robert was a truculent but trustworthy authority. On the floor, beneath the dressing-table, there was a well-worn Gladstone bag; and this Stone unlocked, slowly unpacked, and then took back to the lumber-room whence he had brought it a few days ago.

He would not go. He would stay here—waiting in the hands of Fate. He would not leave her. It was cowardly to fly, and it was safe to stay. He and Sir Robert were

of one mind. He would stay by his love and face all consequences.

In such broken and confused thought as had been possible to him since the night of disaster, these had been the stages of doubt through which he had passed. At first he had believed that the eternal silence was falling swiftly on the lips that might accuse him. He had believed that there would be no recovery of consciousness. Then he had believed that the light would fade from the watchful but unrecognising eyes in a day, in a night, in another day. Then for a little while he had feared. Ere death obliterated all records, there would come, perhaps, a brief remission ; the accusing voice would be heard again ere it became silent for ever. While the fear lasted, he had determined to fly. Then again a torpor of inaction had possessed him, and the house had seemed to hold him as an unthinking, impotent prisoner.

But now he was sure. There was nothing to fear in the house : everything to fear in quitting it. What would Wren think of him, if in these dark hours he turned his back on his benefactor ? What possible pretext could he make for such a desertion ? It would lay the train of thought in Wren's mind, from which he must advance to a slow or swift discovery. It would leave her open to suspicion ; unguarded against Wren's remorseless logic—the questions that spring from solid thought, then the pause for more thought, then again the questions. Inevitably Wren would solve the mystery of his flight.

Then he wrote a few unsigned words on a sheet of paper, put it in an envelope, and addressed the envelope to Mrs Burgoyne. "I am not going away," he had written. "You may rely on my being here, and you need not fear. I want to speak to you. Arrange this somehow."

Only once since the seizure had he been with her alone for a few minutes. It was in the morning of the first day, and she had seemed almost distraught with grief. During the last two days he had not seen her at all. She spent long hours in the sick-room, and, passing to her own room

through the curtained doorway, never showed herself about the house. He tapped at the door of her room presently, and delivered his note. Pale and silent, she stood in the threshold, and took the envelope slowly from his hand. At the sound of his light tap, the door of the sick-room opened also, and the nurse had come out into the corridor.

"That is the memorandum, Mrs Burgoyne," he said.
"The memorandum for you to read."

"Thank you," said Mrs Burgoyne, and she closed her door.

Then he talked to the nurse.

"Is he asleep?"

"No, sir."

"May I go in and see him?"

"Oh yes, sir."

Mr Stone, of course, must be free to enter the sick-room whenever he desired to do so. He was the house doctor: Dr Wren's assistant—the second in command. He came to the room with Dr Wren every morning, as soon as this Nurse Emily had gone on duty for the day.

"If you are going in, sir," said Nurse Emily, "I'll take the opportunity of running down to ask about my tea. They're an old-fashioned lot, the servants"; and Nurse Emily smiled at the good-looking young doctor. "They mean well, I'm sure, but they do want some reminding."

"All right," said Stone. "I'll stay with him till you come back."

Already it was nearly dark in the corridor, but in the room the last light of the brief winter day shone coldly and clearly. Why should he fear? When aiding Wren, he had seemed to seek the shadows of the walls, to stand always in the background, to give cup or glass to Wren and draw away again. But why should he fear? Now, he softly closed the door, came to the foot of the bed, and stood motionless, looking down at the watching, unrecognising eyes—braving their steady, meaningless scrutiny.

And cold and clear as the rays of the setting sun, the

eyes watched his face. When he moved away, the eyes followed him. When he came back, they settled on his face again. Unclouded, calm, and splendid as the fading glory of a sunset sky, the light shone from the eyes full upon him.

He waited till the nurse came back; talked to her for a few minutes; then stood again at the foot of the bed. Nothing of thought behind the attentive eyes—no more purpose or brooding thought, or slightest working of a will, than lies behind the glory of an evening sky. They need not fear the eyes.

XXIII

IF he died, she would have caused his death. That was all her thought in those first three days. Yet as his eyes rested on her face, followed her face, she trembled. Did he remember? Was he forming the words of denunciation that he could not utter? From the depths beneath the inscrutable eyes, was the memory slowly rising? But her thought never wavered: all her thought was in truth a prayer. While Effie with sobbing voice prayed to the Maker of Miracles, she too was praying in thought—to the invisible lords of life and death, to the force that makes the laws which nature may not break.

Let him not die. Let him wake, let him live to denounce her. Let him not die.

Her fire-cloak had gone from her. The love that knows no shame had flowed from her in a cold wave of fear. In those minutes while she crouched and shook in a paroxysm of superstitious terror, it seemed that passionate love had been frozen for ever. Never again, it seemed, could the frozen veins hold the warm streams of joy. But the strain and shock that had numbed Stone's brain and left him almost incapable of thought, in her seemed to have brought back the power to think.

During the long hours, as she sat by her husband's bed, all the long past crept back into her mind. Sitting thus, waiting, praying for the sound of his voice even though the voice should tell her shame to all the world, she lived again the long years of innocent peace, of reverent regard, of the ever-mounting debt of gratitude. He had been to her the source of comfort, peace, and pride—the beneficent power that had ruled her life and made it noble and secure, from the hour in which her peaceful girlhood had darkened beneath a storm of tears and dread. From him all benefits had come—he had

been to her as Effie's watchful, guarding God : the saviour and the guide. What would have befallen her but for him? How nobly he had sought to hide the knowledge of his noble purpose, when humbly he had asked if she would give her young life into his hands. But for him, she and her mother would have been cast into the common world to fight for bread. That was the beginning of the debt—happiness and peace for the mother who had borne her. Joy and pride, instead of tears and pain, to fill her mother's closing years. As she thought of her debt and its payment, as she thought of herself, her heart turned sick with a new horror—the horror that is fed by reasoned thought. As she thought of him, the noblest of mankind, the weight of her remorse seemed crushing her to the earth—seemed to have hands of stone that were forcing her to her knees by the bedside, hands that would hold her on her knees till, not in thought, but aloud for all to hear, she spoke to him of her sin and of her sorrow.

Alone, in her own room, during the long hours in which she hid herself from all the house, she thought of her lover. Coldly, dispassionately she thought of him—of the weakness that had moved her pity, of the strength that her passion had given him. Infinite weakness and infinite strength. It was wonderful to think of:—The horrible union of mind and matter—the cruel laws of life, that can fuse the streams of thought and the streams of blood and separate them for ever in a single hour. What was he and his love? A vague form, a shadow that was powerless to harm her until she herself had given him a breath of flame and brought him from the shadows to overpowering life. Such love as his was the flame that kindles in desire and dies in use. She could send him from her and he would go. He would hold her in his arms, and then as the flame sank would return to the shadows: would glide from her for ever at a word. All the love had been hers. He had not wooed her: she had been the wooer. In the long-delayed crisis of her life, when, of a sudden, life itself called to her, seized her, and dragged her from the grey world of thought, she had made of him the irresistible power; then had yielded

to the power that she had made. He was life calling to her, life holding her, life binding her in chains of fire.

Now sitting alone, cold and still, thinking, thinking, thinking, it seemed that the grey thought-world again claimed her as its own. She had wandered from the shadows to the sunlight, but her place was here within the granite walls, not there in the dancing sunlight. She belonged to the shadows ; and, with each hour of reasoned thought, the shadows were drawing her back.

In the evening of the day on which she had received the note from Stone, there came again a soft tapping on her door ; and when she opened it, Stone took her hand and drew her out into the corridor.

"Sybil. We can talk now," and holding her hand, he led her away from the sick-room towards the end of the corridor.

He had expected that she would come downstairs—perhaps put on her hat and cloak and go out of the house. Then he could have followed her. But, as she did not appear, as disregarding his request she remained in her room, he had waited for an opportunity and then come to her. Now Nurse Susan had gone on duty for the night ; Nurse Emily was at her dinner downstairs, with poor Effie ministering to her wants or sitting by the fire while Nurse munched and chatted. Effie, desolate and forgotten, used to go to the dining-room when the nurses were there, as if she were driven by an imperative need of human company, if not sympathy.

Now they could once more whisper together, and if a servant should enter the corridor and observe them standing side by side, he could raise his voice and seem to speak of household business.

"Sybil. I wanted to tell you—to make you understand that we are safe now. I am sure of it."

"Safe? What do you mean?" She had made him release her hand, and her voice sounded dull and cold.

"Sybil. If we are careful now, no one can ever know. I am certain that we are safe—from him. He will never re-

member—not even if he recovers speech. The thought must show in his eyes, if it were there. It is gone——

“I want you to know this—to feel that we are safe. I am quite sure. He has seen you and he has seen me—for how long? Four, five days now—and he does not ever know us. We are safe now.”

She listened without speaking while he talked to her.

Was he thinking of himself, or of her? Was he urging her to be cautious—to remember that the peril of exposure was past—for her sake or for his? Did he fear that in some hysterical outburst of grief she would betray him as well as herself?

He was praising her now for her braveness, and it seemed to her that he was even asking for words of praise—some words of gratitude for the efforts he had made on her behalf, for the almost fierce commands that he had issued when he forced her to aid him in concealing the secrets of the fatal night.

“No one has guessed. No one can guess now. I promised you that we could do it—and now you are safe.”

She was thinking, while he talked. He could speak thus of himself, of his escape from danger, of the ease of mind that should come to her with the knowledge that the danger was over—he could speak thus without a word of pity for the sufferer. Yet he had loved her husband, had revered and honoured him. But he could betray and forget—forget all but himself. She could measure his weakness now. The cowardly, engrossing egotism was born of the weakness.

“So now be brave, and have no fear, Sybil. Don’t stay up here all day, but come down—and face the world without fear. You—you must accustom yourself to the thought that no one—no one will ever suspect us now.”

Then he told her that he would go back to the workroom. Effie might come up sooner than usual. She could have no suspicion if she came and saw them talking together, but it was wise always to avoid observation. After glancing down the corridor, he would have taken her in his arms once more, but she freed herself from his hands and sprang away from him.

"No, no. Never again—while we live."

"Sybil. What do you mean? Sybil," and he followed her to the door of her room—whispered till she closed the door.

Infinite weakness, to which she had given infinite strength. While he talked, and in the moment while she freed herself from his embrace, she had felt all the weakness and the strength.

Richard Burgoyne never would remember. Stone was certain now. But he could not escape from the consideration of the exact state of the injured brain, the splendid mechanism of thought that was irremediably impaired. At night, while he read his text-books, the diagrams on the pages changed to pictures of the sick-room. This—or this—was what lay hidden behind the watching eyes. Even in sleep he was haunted by thoughts of the great brain itself—the greatest brain of the age ruined by their impious love: a marvellous, priceless instrument broken by children in their wanton sport. While he slept, he was crushed by gigantic burdens of thought, suffocated by the oppression that comes from the sense of immensity. It seemed that he was a prisoner waiting to stand his trial for the monstrous crime by which the wide world and all future ages must suffer loss. And in fantastic dream visions when the ego lay pinioned, he was beginning to expiate the crime.

Once he dreamed that he was climbing iron stairs and walking on iron galleries in some incredibly stupendous powerhouse of electricity. He had ascended hundreds of feet and yet he was far below the unseen dome of the mighty house. Thought, sense was crushed by the mystery and vastness of the place. All about him, as he climbed from stage to stage, were the grey zinc accumulators. Here and there were hollow inexplicable spaces; but all else was filled with the grey zinc and the wondrous white metal rods—bundles of these endless rods which close at hand seemed like faggots in a wood-house fallen into inextricable confusion, but which, as he guessed,

were arranged in the curious labyrinthine pattern ordained by this unknown dynamic law. And through the vast store of rods the electric current flows: now here, now there, an unseen stream of latent fire. Suddenly he understood. This was the brain of Richard Burgoyne. He was standing within the left hemisphere of Richard Burgoyne's brain.

Then in a moment comes a flash, a spark. Something has fused; and up there, as he crawls by galleries and stairs, he can see the mischief—bundles of the white rods fused into a mass; rods, bed, and staunchions burnt and twisted out of shape—a stop here now and always for the playing current.

Once he dreamed that he was in the P.-M. room of his old hospital—the room that he remembered so well. The white tiles glittered as the cold light poured in from the lofty windows; the brass fittings shone and gleamed. The glass of a window vibrated as a waggon rolled by in the busy stream of life that runs so near this place of death. Around the stone table was the old circle of men—busy men in long white smocks with gauntleted hands, watching men in black frock coats, gloveless—talking in low voices—so low that he could hear the drip of water from a tap over a trough, the ticking of the big clock above the door. But he could not speak or move: the sleep fiends had put him with his back to the tiled wall to watch and wait.

The subject on the stone table was Richard Burgoyne. The group of men almost hid the table. He could only see the legs from the knees downwards. Then, as he watched, the feet moved—slowly, then again. No one noticed the movement. They went on with their task. They were busy about the motionless head—they were opening the brain. Then the dead man's voice sounded. *He* had spoken. As their knives worked, the voice sounded deep and strong; and the group broke from the table. They all fled as the dead man rose; but he, the dreamer, could not move. He could not move from the wall, where the sleep fiends had bound him fast with invisible straps and buckles to invisible staples on the tiled wall.

Of a morning he thought of it still. Awake or asleep, it seemed that he must think of it—the ruined mechanism behind the steady eyes.

Lying in bed, while he sipped the tea and ate the bread and butter that the servants had put on the table by his bed, he thought of it and of all the dark future. What would Fate do with him? What would the future bring to him? Thinking thus, he knew his baseness and yet must think—as some mean animal must plot and scheme for self-protection against the destroying forces of its small base world.

After Richard Burgoyne's death? What then? Drinking his tea and eating his bread and butter, he tried to shake off the weariness of the long night of dreams, tried to see what the future was hiding. Only Effie would remain then—to be dealt with at leisure. All the danger would be gone then. Fate would arrange things in its own good time.

To-day there was to be a conclave of doctors. What would the doctors say? What could they say at the end of these ten silent days beyond what they had said when first the silence came? He did not dread the verdict of the doctors.

Now the conclave was assembled in the big room.

Here were the famous men, whose famous names had been studiously noted by our local correspondent: Granville, mute and sedate; Marriott, urbanely talkative; Grange and Bowers, solemnly didactic; Keeling, looking out of window and nervously rattling a bunch of keys in his pocket; rough old Denton, pacing from the window to the door, nodding his head and muttering, getting up steam, certain to harangue the meeting before it broke up; and Wren—famous now for the company he kept—on the hearthrug, listening, weighing words, judging men while deferentially he listened to their words.

The prognosis is unfavourable. The big men are of one mind. They have given their verdict, but they must talk on. And again the air is filled with the horrible anatomical terms—the left third frontal convolution, the commissural

paths, the corpus callosum, the corpus striatum, the geniculate fasciculus, etc., etc.

Then it is Wren who talks. Quietly and deferentially, yet with perceptible emotion, as a man pleads for hope, he talks to the big men. At once Dr Keeling comes from the window and stands by his side. If Keeling has no hope to give, he has other things for Wren—sympathy and admiration. And indeed Wren has been showing an unusual force of character. One might say that in the hour of crisis Wren has proved himself to be of grand material. That is what Keeling thinks, as he listens now. And the big men are listening with a solemn attention. They are compelled to listen, however big they may be, by something Wren conveys to them—not in his words, but in his quiet voice. As he talks, he seems to tell them that he is the pilot; the ship is in his charge; and he does not care twopence how many famous captains are on board. The responsibility is his, and he is not afraid of the responsibility. He is the pilot. Quite unconsciously he conveys this idea of a man, small compared with them, but a man who is sure of himself even while he pleads for hope.

In effect he is saying that the patient will recover. In effect he says: "I know this man, and you don't. He is not an ordinary man and you must not measure him by ordinary standards." Then earnestly he urges his theory of some most unhappy effort or strain as accounting for the haemorrhage. It was an accident; and he craves of them to believe that there will be no more of such accidents: that the damage wrought by the accident is not irreparable.

They have listened with an extraordinary attention, and now as they speak again, Stone at his table watches their lips, watches the expression of their faces, watches their slightest gestures.

The prognosis is unfavourable. They have given their verdict. They cannot alter it, but they are willing to talk as long as Wren cares to make them.

One—Sir Allen Marriott—uses those hackneyed words used by Stone himself.

"No, no," said Sir Allen, "his thinking days are over." And then came the common, stereotyped phrase. "It is the beginning of the end."

Then Sir Robert Denton, who had begun again to pace the room as soon as Wren ceased speaking, gave them a very brief harangue.

"Look here, Wren," said Sir Robert, stopping in his march, tapped a bookshelf and pointed at the shelves—at the long line of the file copies of Richard Burgoine's works. "There. There ye have the history of the case. There's your tale of effort and strain, Wren—forty years incessant wear and tear. What more do ye want to tell the story?"

It was in the evening after the great conclave of doctors that Dr Wren found time for a few words with grief-laden Effie. As, red-eyed and pallid, she wandered disconsolately about the house, seeking human society if only from the callous nurses, she seemed to be crying for help from all kindly hearts.

"Miss Effie—he is not going to die."

Dr Wren was holding her hand, patting it, and his eyes were full of pity. Effie, with her handkerchief before her face, was sobbing. The doctor's kind words of consolation and sympathy had at once unnerved her.

"I know how you love him," said Dr Wren. "Well, that is my conviction. It is not based on medical knowledge: it is based on my knowledge of him."

Holding her hand in his, he consoled and comforted her. She was not to be unhappy; she was to hope—never to lose hope.

"Oh, Dr Wren, I will try to hope. But I have been so unhappy," and she sobbed most bitterly. "I may not be with him—I may not even see him. Jack scarcely speaks to me. Aunt Sybil never speaks to me. Every day I wish that I were dead."

Dr Wren found time to stay with her until he had really lightened the burden of her distress. Jack, he told her,

was almost as completely overwhelmed by grief as she was. He seemed dazed, and though he sat muddling at his table all day long, it was useless labour on which he was engaged half the day at least. There was no reason why Jack should neglect his duty to her. She must rouse Jack and take him out for walks. It would do Jack good. Poor Mrs Burgoyné was absolutely heart-broken. Effie must forgive her if she seemed neglectful. In her grief she had forgotten all but her husband.

"And now I shall tell the nurses that you may go into the room and sit with him every day. I know I can trust you. No reading aloud, no talking, you know—but just to sit there with him. It can do no harm. It may even do good."

Effie, drying her eyes at last, thanked Dr Wren.

"I'll be very careful. Oh, Dr Wren, how good you are—to all of us, and, *once*, I said you were unkind. . . . But what did the others think to-day?"

"They haven't my knowledge of your uncle."

"What did Dr Keeling think?"

"He does not know him as I do."

"What did Sir Allen Marriott think?"

"He does not know him at all."

"Sir Robert Denton?"

"No more does he."

She understood what his answers implied. They had all thought that Uncle Richard would die.

"Now, now, Miss Effie, what did I say? You must keep up your courage. You must *hope*"; and again he took her hand. "I will trust you with a secret—just my own secret thought that I have not shared with anyone; and you are not to share it either. . . . I believe that his memory is already returning. I believe that he remembers me. . . . Now you and I will see if he remembers *you*."

XXIV

TIME was passing—a week, a fortnight, three weeks had passed. It was a month now since the seizure. Could it be possible that Wren's surprising faith would at last be justified?

Except for the aphasia, the hemiplegic symptoms had disappeared. There was no perceptible paralysis above the waist; the right arm moved as freely as the left; there was no difficulty in deglutition: the patient was taking sufficient nourishment; the patient's strength was well maintained. But no spoken word came from the sealed lips: there was no purposive effort even for spoken words—only now and then some plainly involuntary vocal sounds, thick and muffled as the broken echo of an unknown voice. And in all this time—no matter what Wren might hope or think—the patient had given no unmistakable sign that he recognized anyone among all the familiar faces.

Once more all seemed fixed, unchanging, as in that other order of the days before the fatal night, when the kind voice had been heard and the kind eyes knew the loved faces. First the quiet life of the happy home had gone. Then there had been the narrowed circle of home about the sick-bed, with the home spirit still on guard, seeming to draw all closer. Now the house had passed into another phase—unbroken silence and unchanging sadness. Yet now again all the household seemed habituated to the new order. The nurses, always busy and methodic, had established themselves as part of the house itself—with hours and meals now fixed, a rearranged undeviating system of service for all the household staff—the household wheels all running smoothly in the altered grooves.

Effie was constantly in the sick-room. She had very little talk with the others, seemed to dread all contact with the outer

world, refused to see Mrs Townley who called to inquire and asked to see her young friend nearly every day. Only on Sundays—and on the saddest of all Christmas Days—Effie left the Lodge and went to the church on the hill : to see the good vicar look round his church, look at his flock with a glance almost of stern defiance, and then hear the vicar say in firm tones : “The prayers of the church are earnestly desired for Richard Burgoynes . . .”

It was Effie who earnestly desired the prayers of the church for the author of the *Organised Chaos*.

Except in church, Effie seemed more and more to shrink from all places where two or three were gathered together—even though the two or three were Aunt Sybil, Jack, and kind Dr Wren.

The mistress of the house now showed herself again. She was facing the world. Within or without the house the world might study her pale face and the dark circles round her eyes. She might be seen often walking alone on the cliff-path, or hurrying through Pier Street, doing her housewife’s duty, making purchases—hurrying fast from friendly neighbours who would stop her for condolences or information as to “long pieces” in the newspapers.

In these last weeks, Stone had been free from craven apprehension. More and more truly he knew his baseness. Thinking now, he could analyse his thought. He, too, could now feel pity and remorse as of old, before his danger. Why? Because the fear had gone. Now that there was nothing to fear, he could look at the stricken form with pity and regret. He was unshaken in his belief that death was coming slowly to the house. The end was slowly drawing nearer and nearer, in this long pause while Wren still hoped. But soon the end must come.

He had no fear in the sick-room, no fear of the silent man. But suddenly fear came again—fear of Effie.

Had Effie guessed their secret?

It was a thought that for a moment turned him cold as he

talked to her one day in the window of the workroom. He saw her so rarely now that it seemed as if from disuse his actor's art had failed him. Day after day passed and they were not alone together. There were days in which he only saw her once—at the silent evening meal. Now, suddenly, he realised that constraint had sounded in his voice: that he was talking to her almost as to a stranger—to one at least with whom he had no tie beyond an old acquaintanceship. Then with a guilty haste he tried to act again the part of the betrothed, and would have kissed her. But she drew back, made no response—only stood looking at him.

"Effie! Won't you kiss me?"

"Well, Jack," and she tried to smile—"I thought we'd both agreed to leave off kissing."

Then, before he could reply, she had thrown her arms round his neck, and was clinging and sobbing as a child who is making friends with a cruel elder after a long estrangement.

"O Jack."

But then, as in tears she spoke, that thought turned him cold. Had she guessed?

"O Jack. O Jack. Tell me not to cry. Tell me not to be afraid. I have been thinking of dreadful things. Oh, Jack, you can't guess what dreadful things I thought of last night."

"Your uncle?"

But she only sobbed and would not answer.

"Effie—what dreadful things? Tell me—what it was."

"Oh, Jack, I don't know. I was afraid. I had been with him—alone—while Nurse Susan was downstairs—and then I was afraid. Oh, Jack, I wanted you then—to tell me not to be afraid."

That was all she said, in reply to his questions, while sobbing she clung to him.

"But your thoughts, Effie? The thoughts that frightened you—they were about Mr Burgoyne?"

"Yes—I thought of him of course. I am always thinking of him. As soon as Dr Wren goes—I begin to think——"

"Poor Effie! Dr Wren gives you hope—and then after he has gone, you lose hope—and then you are afraid? Is that what you meant?"

"So dreadfully afraid—oh, Jack, afraid of such dreadful things."

Then he was forced to speak words of hope. The lying tongue must lie again—telling her all that he did not believe. She must trust Dr Wren. He was still full of faith—and Dr Wren was never wrong. They must not despair while Wren bade them hope.

She had not given a direct answer to any of his questions, and yet now his fear had left him. She was only thinking of the sick man. She was only speaking of her grief. There had been no other meaning in her words. The dreadful thing was the thing which must happen soon. Alone in the sick-room she too had thought that Death was coming to the house. He was sure now that this was what she meant—the dreadful thing of which she could not bring herself to speak in plainer words.

When she had gone, Stone remained in the window before the open drawers of the cupboard, looking at the bottles and jars and trays, and mechanically fingering the paraphernalia of those old experiments that would never be repeated. He was still thinking of Effie. Poor Effie! He need not speak of his momentary doubt or fear to Sybil. It was nothing. But he must be more careful. Death was coming to the house. When death had come, they soon could deal with Effie.

Infinite weakness and infinite strength. This was the thought of Sybil Burgoyne as she talked to servants, hurried from neighbours, or walked slowly on the cliff beneath the garden walls. In the long hours when Effie was in the sick-room, when one nurse slept and the other nurse was eating, when there was no one to watch them, she was at his mercy. He was her master, and could force her to his will. In any hour he could compel her to a furtive interview. It was for him to command, for her to obey. With the footsteps of

Death sounding nearer, nearer still, she could not escape when he forced her to renew their love.

Walking slowly up the hill, she thought of her love and of her grief. The shadows had drawn her back to them. What had she to do with life and love? Where had all the light and colour gone? Had it ever been there? And she thought of the golden summer, when the world was lit with tardy love. Looking at grey clouds and at the sullen grey sea, at the bare down, she thought of white cliffs that flash in the sun, of yellow fields of corn that change to yellow sands washed with blue trembling water. Had the light and the colour ever been there? Now, in her grief, it was always dusk. A break in the grey clouds; cold sunlight pouring for a moment into empty rooms; then again twilight, deepening shadows and again the long night. About her as she walked, the shadows deepened always now. Death was coming to the house. Death's shuffling, pausing footsteps were sounding nearer. Death itself threw the shadows deeper every hour—yet still, lost in the darkness, listening to the footsteps, he could speak of love.

He was waiting for her now, at dusk, on the cliff-path. She walked with him very slowly till they came to the door in the wall beneath the summer-house, and here he stopped her.

"No," she whispered. "I am not going in that way. I shall walk round into the road."

"But why not come this way?"

He had stopped her again, a few yards from the door.

"Jack. I don't want to go back through the garden. Jack, let me go."

"Why? There is no one in the garden. Why won't you?"

"I can't—because—because you would make me go up there," and she glanced upward to the dark windows of the room above the wall.

"Why not? Sybil, it is quite safe. There is no one in the garden. I have just come through. There is no one about."

"No. No. Jack, be kind to me," and she released herself from his arm and hurried on.

"Jack," she whispered again as they came through the white gate on the road, into the darkness beneath the trees. "Jack, don't be angry with me. Be kind to me."

Again in her room, she thought of him and of his love. Infinite weakness and infinite strength. She has made him her master and must obey him. Out of weakness she has built up this hideous overpowering force.

In the looking-glass she studies her own face sometimes. There is no colour now in the pale face; the light has gone from her eyes; in and about the dark orbit circles, all the lines stamped by the years now show themselves; and the lustre has gone from the dark smooth hair. The heavy bands of hair upon her temples look coarse and dull. It is hair that is now nearly dead: in a year the dark hair will be grey. As she looks at herself in the glass, she thinks of the radiant face of her shameless love; of the soft, glowing skin, of the full, firm throat swelling with joy and song. Not five months ago. Can it be possible? Now grief and the years are claiming their prey. While she looks at herself in the glass she understands.

If he stood beside her now, and, looking in the glass, saw what she can see, he would grant her freedom.

He is cruel to her in the mastery that she has given to him. He is cruel in words and in thought. Most cruel in making her understand. Her fire-cloak has slipped from her for ever. In their brief interviews she tastes all the bitterness of death. It is only the horrible bond of the flesh that holds him. He is cruel to her—making her understand. He is too weak to resist the call of the flesh. That is all—and she understands.

She can think, and suffer all the shame and horror of it; but she cannot escape. Her flame-cloak has gone; yet she is as wax beneath the weak brutality of his embraces—docile in her despair—a meek, heart-broken slave who understands.

XXV

ONCE more the fear had come—not of the speechless man, but of the girl. Had Effie guessed their secret?

He was sitting at his desk and biting his nails, while in thought he endeavoured to retrace the passage of every hour in the last week. Eight days had passed since Effie sobbed upon his breast, since he vowed to himself that he would be careful. He had tried to be very careful—but now, as he worked back through the hours, he realised that Effie had given him few opportunities to practise dissimulation. Eight days had gone and he had not once been with her alone. Had she, too, been careful—matching art with art? Without seeming to avoid him, had she been avoiding him in all these days? Had she been watching him? Not as a household spy, lurking and waiting—but at the silent evening meals, in the morning when they sat at breakfast, had she been watching his face, recording each new tone in his voice, studying his slightest gestures, slowly but surely reading his cruel mystery?

Frowning and biting his nails, he thought now of all possibilities.

He had in these days often written notes to Sybil—a few words only, always without signature. Had Sybil stupidly dropped one of these notes—perhaps, meaning to destroy it, carried it with her and let it fall somewhere about the house? Women do these things. Or, meaning to throw the note into the fire, had she stupidly failed to burn it? A servant perhaps had found it lying among cinders in the grate; and, observing that it was a written paper, had thought she must carefully preserve it, smooth it out, wipe it, and lay it in some conspicuous place on mantelpiece or table. Servants do these things. Idiot housemaids, who will burn the piled manuscript of a whole unpublished book, will snatch from destruction

some scrap of documentary evidence if they can drive one mad by saving it.

Effie would not play the spy. But, suppose that she had seen the few scrawled lines—she would of course have recognised his handwriting, and read it without thought. It would not look like a letter—a direction, an extract from a book written out by Jack for Uncle Richard: no private matter. She would have read it even while she wondered what it was. And then, reading, she might have swiftly guessed.

What had he said in any of his notes? Very little; but enough, perhaps, to fill her mind with doubt. No words of endearment certainly; no name at the beginning, no name at the end—but enough to betray them both, when, knowing who was the writer, she had guessed who was the recipient.

Had the servants begun to suspect? Had some servant been whispering doubt? It is what a servant who suspected might well do. “Miss Effie—I come to you, miss, because I think *you* ought to know. It is a shame, miss, to you that you should be made to put up with it.” In imagination he heard the voice. In imagination he saw Effie—her face suddenly white, her lips trembling, her hand raised to her throat, the fingers pulling at the lace collar of her blouse—a gesture that he had seen and remembered. She would refuse to hear any more, would go to her room, would sit with clenched hands, thinking, struggling not to believe, desperately fighting not to believe the monstrous truth—turning cold and sick and faint as she thought of the sin and the shame, and the foul treason to herself and to the uncle she loved more than life itself. In imagination he saw her. If she believed, it would seem to her, as she thought of it, that all her little world had tumbled into dust, that all the universe had fallen into dust, that her sun and moon and all the lesser lamps had burst forth with dazzling, blinding light and then crashed down and been swallowed in darkness. She would be dazed, crushed into helpless despair, while bravely she struggled not to believe. She would kneel and pray, and perhaps, after hours of prayer would conquer the thought, would rise from

her knees calm again for a little while—no longer believing that the thing could be true.

But then might she not avoid him? Might she not watch him day by day? Had she been struggling not to believe through eight long days?

Or those nurses? Suddenly he thought of the two nurses from the training home in London. He had old experience of nurses. They are quick to suspect; they are quick to give words to each passing thought. One of those nurses might have spoken her thought to Effie. She was constantly with them, had sat with them often at their meals; and, since she had been allowed to enter the sick-room, they had made of her a messenger, a willing assistant, a third nurse to guard the room when they were absent chattering downstairs about the service of the room. One of these women might have spoken to Effie of her betrothed. A joke and a laugh, as she ate her dinner. In imagination he heard it. "I say, miss. You don't look after that doctor of yours. If he belonged to me, I wouldn't trust him further than I could see him." Some vulgar joke—words uttered without meaning perhaps, words bubbling to the surface from the springs of vulgar folly, and yet sufficient to set Effie thinking. Perhaps that was what she had really meant when she spoke that day of the "dreadful things." The nurse's joke was what had set her thinking?

As, in imagination, he heard the voice and the laugh, he cursed all women who had ever worn a nurse's cap and apron.

Had she guessed their secret eight days ago? Had she guessed it this afternoon? Was the secret still safe? Was their fear baseless after all? Sitting at his desk, tortured with doubt, he waited for Sybil Burgoyne. Sybil would come and tell him whether they had cause to fear, or whether they had been frightening themselves when in truth there was nothing to frighten them.

This was why the fear had returned to him. Late in the afternoon, he and Sybil had been in the summer-house—in the deserted room above the wall. It was dark already when

they walked down the garden, and a drizzle of rain was falling. Lamps were lit in the house, and all the blinds had been drawn before the windows of the ground floor : no one had seen them come out—he was sure that they had not been observed. Wren had paid his usual afternoon visit and been gone for half-an-hour ; the servants had cleared away the tea-things and were all safe in their own quarters ; Effie was safe in the sick-room. Effie would not leave the sick-room for an hour at least.

While they whispered together in the dark summer-house, the rain had increased and they were waiting for it to abate again when they heard the door below them opened and closed. Someone had come down the garden and gone out to the cliff-path. They had heard nothing until the latch clicked and the door grated across the gravel. Who was it? It might have been one of the gardeners. But it was odd that they had not heard the gardener's heavy boots crunching on the gravel path. Had their whisper been loud enough to drown such a sound, had their voices been loud enough to reach the man as he passed below the dark windows? It could have been no one from the house itself, because this person had not returned to the house. No one from the house would go out to the cliff—unless it was someone who had come to spy upon them and then gone out of the garden to escape the chance of being seen by them. Could such a person have come up the stone steps and listened at the door of the room while they whispered?

It was raining fast as they themselves came back to the house. And in his thought he blessed the friendly rain. After all, if one of the gardeners had heard their voices, he could only think that they had taken shelter in the summer-house. Or, rather, that would be an explanation of their presence, no matter what the man might really think.

Then had come a discovery. Effie was not in the sick-room. She was not in her own room. She was not in the house. It must have been Effie who had passed out to the cliff-path by the door in the wall. But Effie never left the house, except to

go to church ; and she would not go to church by the cliff-path. It might be some saint's day ; there might be some evening service at the church ; but she would never have gone that way. Had she heard their voices ? She would not play the spy. If it was Effie—as it must have been—they might be certain that she had not mounted the steps and listened at the door. But could she have heard their voices ? If she had half guessed their secret already, the knowledge that they had stolen from the house to whisper in the darkness of the deserted room would most fatally have confirmed her suspicion.

"What do you think ?" he asked, when Sybil brought him news of her discovery. "Do you think she heard us ?"

"No, I don't think she did. Jack—if she had heard us she must have come to us. Jack—if she knew that we were there and did not come to us, it must mean that she knows everything."

"Why has she gone out ?"

"I don't know. I have asked Nurse Emily. She does not know. I hoped she would tell me she had sent her to fetch something—to go to one of the shops."

"What shops ? She wouldn't go that way."

"Yes, she might. If she were going to Hind's—or to Ingle's, of course."

"Why should she go to Ingle's—so late as this ? Impossible. But, Sybil—yes, she might have been going to Hind's—or to any shop at that end of Pier Street. You must see her directly she comes in. You must find out—don't stay here. Meet her as she comes in."

Sybil Burgoyne was waiting in the hall when, after an hour, Effie returned. She had come back by the road and not, as she had gone, through the garden.

"Effie ! Is that you ?"

The hall door had opened, and Sybil Burgoyne was looking into the dark porch.

"Yes."

And Effie stepped from the darkness into the lamplit hall. She was without her hat or coat ; her hair was plastered about her white forehead ; water streamed from her.

"Effie! Where have you been? You are wet through."

She had turned again to the dark porch and was shaking the water from her sleeves and her skirt.

"It has been raining hard, hasn't it?" she said as she shook her skirt and rubbed the wet chalk from her boots. Then she crossed the hall to the stairs.

"Effie—you must change your things at once. Why did you go out?"

Stone had come softly from the workroom, and was in the passage, listening. Effie did not answer the question: she was going up the stairs.

"Effie—tell me what made you go out. Where have you been all this time—in the pouring rain? Effie!"

Then she answered.

"I have neuralgia—toothache. I couldn't stop in the house—so I went out—on the cliff, and walked up and down."

"But Effie—what a mad thing to do—in the pouring rain."

"I did not know that it was raining."

"Well, be quick and change your things—I—I hope it won't make your toothache worse."

"Jack—you heard?"

"Yes. She knows."

He was sitting at his desk again, biting his nails, and staring in front of him.

"She said she could not stop in the house. Did you notice that she never called you Aunt Sybil? She never said your name. It is not true—of course—that she had toothache. She only said that when you made her say something."

"No. It may be true. She *has* had toothache."

"Are you sure of that? When?"

"The other day. She was in her room and I thought I heard her crying—so I went in and found her sobbing on the bed, and she told me she had been awake all night with toothache and she was in great pain then."

"Why didn't you tell me all this at the time?"

Then he thought of how he himself had concealed his passing fear of a week ago. If he had told Sybil of his momentary doubt, she would certainly have let him know of this second fit of sobbing.

"Jack. I believed what she said. I did not think it strange."

"Did you do anything about the toothache?"

"Yes. I brought her some menthol and rubbed it on her temples, and I asked her to speak to Dr Wren—to ask if it was really neuralgia or toothache."

"Did she speak to Wren?"

"No. She wouldn't. She said she was better, before he came—and I never thought of it again."

"I don't believe in the toothache. She knows."

"Jack—I am not sure. You say she didn't call me Aunt Sybil—but, if she knew, would she have spoken to me at all?"

"She knows."

"What shall we do? Shall I ask Dr Wren to come?"

"Wren? No. He is the one person I most dread. If she saw Wren—whenever she sees Wren alone, she may tell him."

For a little while he was sure that Effie knew their secret. As he sat staring across the table, when Sybil Burgoyne had left him, he was sure.

What will she do? Will she tell Wren? Will she turn instinctively to the man who loves her uncle? What will she do?

Then hope came again. They had perhaps after all been frightening themselves needlessly. Perhaps she suspected. Something had perhaps occurred to arouse her suspicion, but she did not know. She had not heard their voices in the summer-house; she had not guessed that they were there; she had not gone out into the darkness to meet the driving rain on the cliff, to let it beat upon her forehead while with

clenched hands she walked alone in the darkness, as one desperate, heart-broken, maddened by the shock of the unbearable truth.

She had at once changed her wet clothes. There was hope even in this. If she had locked herself in her room, shivering in the wet clothes but careless of danger from cold, he would have known that there was no hope.

But soon Mary had come down with the dripping garments. This was a good indication—enough to make him hope.

"Yes, sir—but Miss Effie did ought to have had a hot bath. I told her, sir, she ought—but she says she's all right—sure she hasn't taken no cold."

And then Mary gave him better news still.

"But, sir, if it don't bring on her face-ache again, it's a mercy."

Mary knew of the toothache. For nearly a week Miss Effie had been suffering off and on from the pain. Mary had urged her to go to Mr White, the dentist, but Miss Effie had replied that Mr White could do her no good. Her teeth were all right: it was neuralgic pain, not real toothache.

Then he began to hope. The toothache had not been a hasty invention—a physical pain substituted for a mental pain, to account for the outward evidence of distress and grief. She had really been tortured by neuralgia when Sybil had found her sobbing on the bed.

"Where is she now? With her uncle?"

"No, she is still in her room."

"Sybil—I don't like that. Hasn't she seen him since she came in?"

"No."

"Is her door locked?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Go up and speak to her. Go in if she will let you—stay with her and make her talk. Speak of me—and watch her then. You can say I sent you. Say I want to know if I cannot go and get her anything from the chemist's."

Then Sybil Burgoyne talked to her through the locked

door. Effie said that the pain was much less ; she was lying on her bed, well wrapped up and quite warm : she was resting and felt much better, and she did not want to get up and let her aunt into the room.

"Effie, I hope you are really better. I hope you will be able to come down to dinner."

Effie said that she thought she would come down to dinner.

"That's right. Keep quiet, and rest till then—but do come down and try to eat something, if you can."

Then Effie spoke again, giving them more cause to hope. She said Aunt Sybil.

"Aunt Sybil, don't trouble about me. I am all right." And then, as though unconsciously sounding an echo of the loved uncle's words : "I shall do very well. Aunt Sybil, I shall do very well, now."

"That," said Stone, when Sybil had reported all these words—"that is the best indication of all. . . . No—she would not have said that. And she would not have promised to come down to dinner."

Then, for a little while, he almost ceased to fear.

But she did not come down to dinner. While they stood waiting for her in the dining-room, Mary brought them a message. Miss Effie's face was bad again ; she could not join them at the evening meal.

"I've taken her up some milk and biscuits," said Mary. "She'll eat something later on, but she doesn't feel she could go through a solid dinner—like—"

Mary had seen her. The trusted old servant had been admitted to the room, but the mistress of the house was excluded. Was it a good indication, this, or a bad indication ? She was not hiding herself from all the world—she was not sitting with clenched hands, dazed, hopeless, half mad. She had allowed a servant to see her face, to talk with her. A good indication, surely.

The door was locked again, Effie was again resting, when Sybil Burgoyne again sought admittance.

"Effie. Are you sure you have everything you want? Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing, Aunt Sybil. Don't trouble about me—please don't trouble about me, Aunt Sybil."

Once or twice during the long evening he talked with Sybil Burgoyne, and the fear had almost left him.

"Yes. I think now that it is all right—I think—poor Effie—it is really toothache. I think we may let Wren see her to-morrow."

"She is lying quite still—not moving about the room."

"That is a good indication, too. Poor Effie!"

"But, Jack, why won't she let me go in? Why does she keep the door locked?"

"I don't think anything of that—but, Sybil—this is what I don't like. Why hasn't she been to him? You are sure she hasn't?"

"Yes."

While he feared, he felt no pity. When he hoped, he was shaken by remorse. It was always thus with him. As he sat in front of his desk, or slowly paced from the wall of books to the empty arm-chair, he thought of all his baseness.

He looked back into the past, and saw himself as he had been, and then thought of himself as he was. He had been a creature of high hope, of noble ambition, able to think, able to work, without fear, without self-distrust—glorying in the power with which nature had invested him: the busy, weaving brain, and the steady nerves and skilful hands that could loyally serve him in his chosen work. Now he had sunk to this—a creature of broken thoughts and shattered nerves: a meanly scheming, basely plotting animal, impelled always by lust or by fear. All the dreams, all the noble sanguine hopes of youth might have come to nothing in the end. He knew that he could never have been great. Wren had perhaps understood that very soon. Wren had quickly bidden him give up his dream of glory. He might not have been great, but he might have been honest and fearless to the end.

Only a few gliding years, since he came into this quiet room for the first time. A few tranquil, easy years ; and yet, while they glided by, this hideous work of destruction had been accomplished. Outwardly he was the same : inwardly nothing was left but corruption and decay.

Walking to and fro in the quiet room, he thought of the abominable union of mind and matter that makes us what we are. No gentle ruling spirit that may sit in the house of life while all about it slowly crumbles into dust, but the linked progress of thought and life till both are lost in death. As well ask of the flame to burn bright and clear from the smoky untrimmed wick, as hope for the noble fearless thought from fibre and cell when once the morbid change has begun. The word of doom had been spoken for him—years ago. Had he known himself really, all that had happened to him since then might have been foretold. And in thought he heard again Reece speaking to him ; felt again that clamminess of fear that he had felt then for the first time. From the hour in which Reece had told him to stop working, his doom had begun.

“But what does that mean, sir ?” he had asked huskily.
“Shall I never be good for anything again ?”

“Oh no”; and in memory, he heard the pause and the hesitation. “My dear boy, I don’t mean that. Oh no. But you must make up your mind to be careful. You have been driving the machine too fast. Now you must be content to give the machine some rest,” and so on.

If he had been a rich man, he would have been told by Reece to go and live in the country, to hunt and shoot, and in a year perhaps marry some nice healthy daughter of a neighbour and never open a book again.

It was doom sounding—doom for a materialist. The mechanism was deteriorating, must henceforth slowly deteriorate. Only Lord Frodsham and his friends can talk easily of noble spirits in broken frames, of the soul of a man carrying on the good fight when the body would skulk away from the battlefield. He might have known, when he talked

with Wren, that the power to fight was fast going from him : that in truth there was no fight in him.

Doomed really : a helpless puppet in the hands of Fate from the first hour in this quiet peaceful room. Powerless to escape, no matter how many chances were offered. And he thought of the girl who had given him her innocent love. Heavens and earth, what more could a man ask for than had been freely given to him ? But he was a real man no longer. He was the outer husk of a man ; but, within, there was nothing except corruption and decay. No steady flame could come now from the charred uneven wick : only a sputtering smoky flame, leaping high and red, sinking low in smoke.

She would have saved him from himself. She would have taken him by the hand and led him from the fatal house across the wide smiling earth. If there were spirits, then she was one —the spirit of health, of hope, of purity. And he thought of her childlike trusting eyes, the smile that should have been the sunlight for him. He thought of the sweet pure fountain of love that had sprung from the sweet pure source of innocent life—for him. But he could not be saved, even by her. Fate was driving him ; a curse had been laid on him ; some cursed taint in the blood had poisoned all his life.

Fearing her no more, he thought of her and her pain in a hot anguish of remorse. She must know sooner or later. How should he deal with her when the loved uncle was gone ? Death was coming to the house. But how could Death help him to deal with her—to ease the inevitable pain ?

“ Well ? ”

Sybil Burgoyne had returned to the room, and for a few moments he stood staring at her, scarcely seeing her, not understanding what she said.

“ It is very late. I think they have all gone to bed. I came to ask you : shall I speak to her again ? Shall I go to the door and say good-night—or is it better not to disturb her ? ”

“ Is she asleep, do you think ? ”

“ No. I heard her moving just now.”

"Yes. Then you might speak to her. I'll come up with you. I want to hear her voice--to hear how she answers."

"Will you speak to her yourself?"

"No. . . . No—I—I don't think—You told her I was anxious?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't think I'll speak to her. I will follow you—and listen. She need not know that you and I have been together."

The long evening had glided swiftly while he had been thinking in the big room. The long night was creeping by. All the house seemed hushed in sleep, as he stood in the corridor listening for the voice from the locked room.

"Effie. Are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Is there anything I can get for you?"

"Nothing. Good-night, Aunt Sybil."

"Good-night, Effie."

"Good-night."

XXVI

HORROR filled the house.

Morning had come with a cloudless blue sky. For the first time for many weeks the sun was shining brightly, sending rainbow beams to dance in empty rooms, flooding the stairs and one end of the silent corridor with streams of golden light. Stone had been looking from the dining-room window into the sunlit garden, while he waited for Sybil Burgoyne to come down to breakfast, to bring news of Effie, to return without prelude to their doubt of last night. Then as he stood by the window listening to the chirping of sparrows, watching a songless thrush, the voices of the women upstairs had reached him.

“Sir, she won’t answer.” It was Sarah, white-faced, hysterical, calling to him from the passage. “She won’t answer. She won’t undo the door. Oh, she won’t answer. Do come up—oh, do come.”

They were all about the locked door—the servants, with the mistress of the house on her knees, calling through the door, beating on the door. One of the nurses was outside the sick-room, watching the frenzied group.

“Effie—Effie—for God’s sake speak to me.”

Then he pulled Sybil Burgoyne from the door and beat on it himself, while he shouted hoarsely:

“Effie—Effie—Effie.”

With all his strength and weight he was hurling himself against the door, but the door held firm. He could not break it open. Then he looked round wildly for anything that could help him; ran from the door, downstairs; and came again staggering through the golden light with an oak bench from the hall. The women fell back as he swung round with the heavy bench. Then, springing forward, he drove it end

on against the lock and smashed the lock, smashed the legs from the bench, smashed one of the door panels, and burst the door open.

The women had fallen back. They stood behind him on the threshold and he entered the room alone. From the doorway he could not see her: the room seemed empty. But even as he sprang round the bed, he had seen the two glasses and the green bottle on the dressing-table. He knew that she was there, on the other side of the bed, between the bed and the wall. He had seen the bottle only nine days ago, in the open drawer when they two stood together before the cupboard by the workroom window. It was the green bottle with the strychnine solution brought into the house by Wren for the experiment upon the mice nearly two years ago.

She was lying face downwards, hands clenched, back arched—quite cold, dead for many hours.

In the dull grey pause—the timeless horror between the discovery and the inquest—one stood behind drawn blinds and heard people talking as in a dream. By day and night, there was wailing and lamentation. Mary, sobbing always, has now much to say—revelations to make to one and all.

“Oh, she did it—poor darling—she meant to do it that night.—Oh, God forgive me, I might have guessed it,” and she sobs and beats her hands together.

As in a dream Sybil Burgoyne listens. Mary was sobbing and wailing at a distance: now she is in the room, standing close to Stone. It is a dream voice that has come nearer to them of a sudden.

Gasping hysterically, grey-haired Mary tells them what had happened three nights ago.

Very late that night Mary was sewing in her pantry—finishing something that she was determined to get done before she went to bed. Then, when she was going up the servants’ staircase, she heard sounds of movement, opened the little door in the corridor, and peeped out. It was Miss Effie, with

a candle in her hand, going to her uncle's room. Thinking there might be something wrong, Mary had followed; and through the open door of the sick-room had seen Miss Effie by the bed, stooping over the bed. The master was sleeping, Mary thought; and certainly the nurse was sound asleep. Miss Effie, Mary thought, "was stooping cautious-like to kiss the master without waking him"; and having done so, she drew back to the door, "still watching him like, very cautious not to make a noise." When she turned and came out to Mary, she was weeping.

"'Whatever is it, Miss Effie?' I says. And she says: 'It's all right, Mary—all right!' 'But,' I says, 'is your tooth bad? 'No,' she says, 'it's better to-night. But,' she says, 'I was frightened about uncle, so I went to him, and seeing him made me cry. You understand, Mary,' she says. And I went into her room and stood there talking, and she dried her eyes—and she threw her arms round me and she kissed me like as she done as a child, and she says: 'Stay with me, Mary, for a little while.' And I sat with her that night, talking first of one thing then of another like as we used to do, till she dropped off to sleep. And God forgive me—but I think now she meant to do it—was brooding of it that night—poor darling. And that was why she went to see the master. It was her thinking of him that stopped her," and again Mary sobs and wails and wrings her hands.

Then Mary has more to say.

"Oh, it isn't me alone that thinks so. The others say now they could see it in her face. Ruth she says she's certain sure it was on her mind to do it. It begun over a week—yes and two weeks ago—crying in her room as though her heart would break. Ruth heard her, and then the toothache was the answer—same as she gave me. I believed it. But I might have guessed. God forgive me, I might have guessed. I might have known there was more behind it, and been with her—poor darling—on the night she done it. . . .

"And now I'll say it. I believe it was in her mind that you and she had fell out. And God forgive you, Mr Stone, if you

spoke hard things to her. So there—and now I've said it"; and Mary beats the air, and gasps and wails.

The dream voice has gone. When Sybil Burgoyne looks up again, they are alone.

Hollow-eyed and haggard, they move about the darkened house, from room to room, as if driven by ghosts. Instinctively they seek each other, sitting together silent—afraid of solitude. Comfort or solace there can be none for either, but together they can perhaps support their misery better than in solitude.

They were together behind a closed door when the shuffling, stumbling footsteps—the dragging footsteps of men carrying a heavy weight passed out of the house. While these new footsteps sounded, Wren and the two nurses were on guard in the sick-room.

Wren's voice, as in a dream, had been talking to her; and when very slowly she understood what he meant, she had begun to shiver and had fled from him. He had asked her to look at the dead face. He had told her that she must not delay if she wished to see the dead form as it had been in life.

She can think for a very little while with dreadful clearness of the tragedy itself, of her own agony of sorrow; then mercifully there comes diffused pain about her head, a warm fulness as of blood pressing in her head, a curious feeling of suffocation; and then thought of her misery becomes most mercifully impossible. It is not unconsciousness or anything approaching to unconsciousness, but all has become dreamlike again. Reasoned, connected thought has ceased to be possible; but of trivial things, external objects, of all that is disconnected with the cause of her misery, she can still think—can and does think with a dreamlike, illogical interest. She may watch the narrow shaft of sunlight that falls from the side of the drawn blind; she may consider the pattern on the carpet, and think if the roses and the ribbons on the wall paper are separated, cluster from cluster, by eight inches or nine inches. She may

think thus without the least pain for a long, long time. Then, suddenly, once more she must think of the dead girl. Her tears have begun to gush from her eyes again quite unexpectedly while she studied the wall paper; and the tears herald the thought. Then comes the pain: warm, diffused pain, slowly blotting out the thought.

Thus it is by night and by day—the dream, the thought, the pain. At night or in the day, she has not slept since she knelt at the locked door and prayed for the answering voice.

Again Wren was talking to her. They had been alone: now he was with them. The dream voice had come nearer. He was standing close to the chair where Stone sat and stared at the carpet; and, as he talked, his hand was on Stone's shoulder. The dream voice was slow and hesitating—broken with emotion.

"I have been telling Jack that he must not leave us yet . . . Mrs Burgoyne. I have been telling this poor fellow that he cannot go away just yet. I only wish he could——"

Then he explains about the inquest.

Stone must not fly from the dull grey horror till after the inquest. Then it will be best for him to go at once—it will indeed be imperatively necessary for his health that he should at once leave the house of woe.

"But first we have this—this sad ordeal. It will be inexpressibly painful—to all of us—but we must not shirk it. There is a duty to the dead as well as to the living. . . . The inquiry—that must be held—will be quite formal. There is no doubt—there can be no doubt that they will give the usual verdict. But poor Jack's evidence will be important. . . .

"Mrs Burgoyne! They will ask you very little. I know that it will be the wish of everyone to spare us unnecessary pain. . . . Mrs Burgoyne—there is throughout the town—the most sincere sympathy—universal regret—and sympathy."

The inquest, says the low hesitating voice, will be on the day after to-morrow, some time in the afternoon—three o'clock or half-past three probably. Then the funeral can

take place next day. All arrangements have been made : the mistress of the house need not think of such matters.

Upstairs in the sick-room, all has been well—so far. There were grounds for very grave anxiety, especially yesterday morning when it was impossible to keep the house quiet, when for a considerable time the house was in the hands of busy men, when in the corridor, on the stairs, and through the hall, so many strange footsteps were sounding. Then, in the sick-room, there was restlessness—very great restlessness. And since that hour there has been no sleep in the sick-room. Mrs Burgoyne will readily comprehend that all our hopes have been darkened : that the grief which now must be borne by the patient, should he ever be able to realise the fact of his bereavement, must jeopardise all the chances of that complete recovery for which we have steadfastly hoped. If—and this is possible—the patient has already formed some dimly oppressive concept of the sorrow that is coming to him, then there are grounds for the deepest anxiety—then our hope in the future is almost lost in darkness. Mrs Burgoyne will comprehend that it is right to say these things at once. “But—well, the future—the future is what we cannot control or even modify by any action now.”

Then again he speaks of the inquest. He talks for an immense time, as it seems. He is preparing them for the ordeal.

But she scarcely listens. She is thinking of the china behind the latticed glass over there. The blue and white bowl was her mother’s. It used to stand on a shelf in the study, or library, of the house at Woking. There used to be fossilised teeth and a flint knife lying in the bowl. That and the Chelsea cup and saucer are the only things in the cabinet that had been in her old home.

Presently she looks at Stone. The hand has gone from his shoulder ; the dream voice has ceased speaking ; they are alone.

Once she touched him. In pity of a misery that perhaps was greater than her own, she stretched out her hand and touched him—in pity laid her hand upon his arm. But he

shook her off roughly ; sprang away from her ; and then stood shaking and stammering, while he stared at the space between them.

“I—I can’t. I—I—can’t.”

It was as though she had been wooing him to the old caresses and his flesh had revolted in fear and horror. It was as though, when she approached him, something invisible had stepped between them. It was as though two dead hands had been laid upon his breast to thrust him back from contact with the living hand.

Then she sits and weeps—and then, red-eyed, watches him and thinks for a very little while with dreadful clearness of the ruin they have slowly wrought. Infinite weakness and infinite strength.

He sits with clenched hands and lowered head. His shoulders have contracted ; his chest seems to have fallen in ; and he coughs. It is as though physically, as well as mentally, he has collapsed under his torment. He is a pitiable, feeble wreck—youth gone, hope gone, courage gone.

Watching him she thinks for a moment of how a strong man would have acted. He would have faced the consequences of their love : would have taken her away—far away—for ever. They would have left grief and shame behind them—but not this unspeakable horror of disaster and death. Yet in her thought of him there is only pity.

And he too thinks, with fitful power, while he shakes and coughs and clenches his hands. He thinks of the murdered girl : of the laughing happy girl whom he has murdered. In thought he uses no other word. He has killed her. He has done her to death as surely as if with raining blows he had beaten out the light in the trustful eyes, struck and struck again in blind homicidal rage, till the clinging arms relaxed, till the moaning voice ceased, till she lay face downwards at his feet. Such a murderer might have come in the morning light, as he had come, to look at his work—to find her, lying where the sunlight danced in rainbow fire, quite cold, dead for many hours.

And he thought of the white mouse for whose life she had pleaded. He had robbed her of hope in life: he had opened for her the gates of death. And he thought of his cursed experiment. He thought of her writhing on the floor in her agonised sympathy, while the mouse writhed in the horrible tetanic convulsions produced by the cursed strychnine. That was how she had writhed upon the floor upstairs, again and again in the ghastly convulsions, again and again with brief respites of motionless exhaustion, till at last the end came. She was alone in the silence and the darkness, hopeless, desperate, thinking that her God had forsaken her, knowing that she was forsaking her God, and yet using the key that he had put within her reach to open the gate of death. Because the cursed lentzine was a rare and expensive drug he had guarded it with miserly care: had put it away with his treasures where none could tamper with it. But the strychnine solution—because it was a common thing, of no value—he had left in the drawer with all other common things. There were other poisons, many poisons, there; but of them she knew nothing. But for him she would have known nothing of strychnine and its power. Perhaps, as they stood in the window that day, she had seen the bottle in the drawer and remembered what it was: perhaps, even as she sobbed upon his breast, she had thought: "This is what **I** must use if he drives me to my death."

It was late in the evening—the last night of the timeless pause. To-morrow would bring their public ordeal.

"Jack. . . . What will you tell them?"

"I don't know."

"What shall **I** say?"

"You—you! I don't know."

"Shall I tell them the truth? . . . Jack—if they ask me—I shall tell them the truth."

"They won't ask you. They will ask me the questions."

"Will you tell them the truth?"

"I don't know. . . . Sybil—I think I am going mad."

Then, after a long silence, he spoke again.

"No, you must not tell them the truth."

"Why not? I shall tell it—in spite of myself—if they ask me."

"No. You must say we don't know why she killed herself—— No cause. . . . You didn't understand Wren. No cause. . . . The verdict must be temporary insanity — no cause. If there were a cause, they could not say that. Do you understand? . . . For her sake—not ours—we must keep our secret now."

XXVII

FROM continued sleeplessness all Sybil Burgoyne's senses, except one, seemed numbed and inactive. But the sense of vision seemed strangely acute: as though the sleepless eyes had been steadily gaining power, instead of losing power from fatigue. As she walked by Stone's side down the hill towards the river and the Anchor Inn, she was conscious of a quite unusual clearness and sharpness of outline in far-off objects as well as in things near at hand.

It was splendidly bright January day—extraordinarily silent and peaceful: the sky cloudless, the sea glittering. There had been light snow and frost the night before, and the ridge of down was white still, but spring was in the air. The days were lengthening already; the sun was high three hours after noon. She passed by white snowdrops in a garden, and the yellow jasmine in flower on a sunlit wall—and again white snowdrops. All the world seemed bright—a young girl's day, of light and hope and budding life.

Near the railway and by the police station, men and women bowed to them, or stood staring as they passed. Then they turned into a passage between high walls—a short cut that would bring them behind the police station round to the porch of the old inn. Wren would be there, waiting for them.

There was an open gate in one of the walls of this passage, and about the gate children just out of school had gathered to stare into the yard—a cluster of little girls with dazzling white pinafores, and behind them, staring, oafish boys.

"Run away, you little girls," said the man at the gate briskly and good-naturedly. "Run away, don't I tell you?" And then fiercely to the boys: "Go on, you boys, or I'll bring my stick to some of you."

He took off his hat to Mrs Burgoyne, and as she passed the gate, she saw the paved yard full of men. A dog on a chain had come from his kennel and was fawning on one: the others were standing about, talking or going in and out of the brick shed. Among these common men she recognised Mr Hind, the stationer; and at the door of the shed, she saw Dr Wren and a fat grey man whom she had known by sight for years. Instinctively she understood. The brick shed at the bottom of the yard was the public mortuary. The dead girl was there.

In the hall of the Anchor Inn there were more men—Mr Ingle, the hairdresser, talking to Mr Allen, the red-haired solicitor; and in front of the bar window, a knot of men drinking. The men's loud voices were hushed at once; all took off their hats to Mrs Burgoyne; all seemed to know her. Then the barmaid came out of the bar parlour and spoke to her.

"Will you step in here and wait, ma'am?" and the barmaid ushered Mrs Burgoyne and Stone into a small sitting-room, or office. "Mr Purvis—the Coroner's officer, ma'am—he said, would you wait in here till he comes down and shows you to your seats. Mr Purvis says they'll begin three-thirty sharp."

Then presently, while they sat waiting in the little room, there came a knock at the door and Mr Allen presented himself. She had spoken to Mr Allen two or three times many years ago, but since then she had regarded him as an enemy. He was the only man in Whitebridge who had ever been rude to her husband.

"Mrs Burgoyne, I am loath to intrude on your sorrow; but is it a fact—as Purvis tells me—that you have no one to represent you at the inquest?"

Then Mr Allen offered them his professional services, and for a moment they looked at each other fearfully. What did he mean?

"In these circumstances, it is always necessary—always best to be professionally represented. Always saves pain. Very awkward, painful questions are asked."

But Mrs Burgoyne did not answer. She was looking at Stone, and she had begun to tremble.

"Mrs Burgoyne—I should not have spoken, but I saw at once how upset you are, and Purvis told me just now that you had no one. Please allow me to represent you. It will be best—I assure you, I ask this from no improper motive. I am not seeking business. But it is wrong that you and the family should have no one."

He spoke kindly: he meant well, not ill. Stone said nothing, and after a pause, she murmured some words implying acceptance of Mr Allen's proposal.

"Thank you. I am sure it is what Mr Burgoyne would wish. I don't know if he ever mentioned it—but there was a complete reconciliation between Mr Burgoyne and myself—last autumn. In fact, he was good enough to promise that if the chance came, he would let me act for him."

Then Mr Allen hurried away.

They waited until gradually the sound of the men's voices and the men's footsteps died away and all the house seemed silent as the grave. Then there was another knock at the door, and the brisk man whom she had seen guarding the yard gate appeared.

"They are beginning, ma'am. Best go up now, ma'am—first floor—past the billiard-room. I'll show you. Mr Purvis he'll be there to receive you."

It was an old house that had once been the principal inn of Whitebridge. She had been here on one occasion with Effie, to a sale of work in the big room on the first floor. She knew that she was going to the same room now. It was used as a masonic lodge, for minor charitable bazaars, sales by auction, and such humble entertainments of conjurers, singers, and musicians as were not worthy of the larger and more expensive accommodation of the Assembly Rooms. People used to say of any prospective show that was obviously of a modest character: "Of course they'll have it at the Anchor and not at the Assembly Rooms." She knew that Miss Granger and her friends had often acted here; but she had not known till now that the room was used for inquests.

There were three windows on one side of the room, and beneath the windows the jury were already seated on two long benches with desks in front—thirteen or fourteen men, talking among themselves and shuffling their feet as they turned to and fro. On the other side of the room there were many people, standing and sitting; and at the bottom of the room, vague masses of people. Down the middle of the room there ran a long table, or several tables set close together; and here were reporters, a sergeant of constabulary, Mr Allen busily writing. At the top of the room there was a low dais, on which stood the Coroner's desk. Facing the jury was the witness-box—a movable structure like a low pulpit or reading-desk from a church, large enough to contain a chair. There was a door behind the dais from which used to come the conjurer or pianist: to advance across the low platform and bow to the waiting audience. The platform was empty now: the audience was waiting for the Coroner.

There was no one to receive them. They stood just inside the room, hesitating, uncertain where they should go to find seats; and wherever she looked, she saw familiar faces. Mr Hind sitting with the jury, Mr Ingle sitting at the lower end of the reporters' table whispering information to our correspondents, shop people from Pier Street, the two young assistants from the fishmonger's, a dressmaker's girl who had been often at the Lodge, the pew opener from the church—all the people who bowed to her habitually, whom she knew well without knowing their names. All Whitebridge had been drawn to the Anchor Inn on this glorious sunny afternoon.

In the front rank of the crowd at the bottom of the room were the servants from the Lodge—seeming to wish her to join them, pantomiming to their mistress that they would find her a chair down there. But then Mr Allen, looking round, saw her, and jumped up from the table, and conducted her and Stone to chairs beside the jurymen's benches.

She was close to a window here, and from her seat could look across outbuildings into the paved yard that she had

passed just now. The yard was empty ; the dog was sleeping in a patch of sunlight before his kennel. Then she saw Wren and the fat grey man come out of the brick shed and carefully lock the door. The dead girl was there. They were locking the ghost of the dead girl in the dark shed, lest the ghost should come out into the sunlight and point at the window where her murderers sat trembling.

“Gentlemen. The Coroner.”

The grey man had thrown open the door behind the dais and all rose as the Coroner advanced and seated himself at his desk.

So the grey man was Mr Purvis, the Coroner’s officer ! She had known him by sight for fifteen years and had sometimes wondered who he was. She knew the Coroner—a middle-aged sandy man, whom she had frequently seen driving in a high dog-cart on the road to Slanes. He was taking papers from a black bag, arranging papers on his desk, and talking to his officer while he adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles. Now he was bowing to her. Mr Purvis was talking to her—telling her that the Coroner wished them to have better seats. Then they were placed quite close to the Coroner, where all eyes could see them, where all could watch their faces.

It was dreamlike now for a long time. Voices sounded at a distance, then drew nearer. In all that had happened she had taken a curious unthinking interest. It was an emotionless but not a dull dream slowly unfolding itself. It was curious how Mr Purvis opened the court, reading from a paper, saying “Oyez, oyez.” It was strange to hear familiar names as the Coroner read out the list of the jury, and to watch them all standing with hands raised while Mr Purvis made them swear in some archaic formula. Something had been said about the body. They had all seen the body.

“Gentlemen, who do you choose for your foreman ?”

“They have chosen, sir,” said Mr Purvis—“Mr Hind.”

“Very good.”

Then the Coroner had got to work in a quiet, talkative, informal manner.

"Gentlemen, this is a young lady—and I think I will say at once what I know you must all feel, and I am sure I can say for myself that it was with very sincere regret that I received the official notification of this very sad event. Well, then——"

Mr Allen was talking now.

"Mr Coroner, I represent our respected fellow-resident Mr Richard Burgoyne, and the family."

"Very good, Mr Allen."

"I would like to say, sir, that in the few words you have let fall—— But first I would say that——"

"Yes, yes, Mr Allen," and the Coroner waved his hand.

"I do not wish to interrupt you, sir—— It was only to remark that I know well I may rely on you to give me all necessary facilities with the witnesses and——"

"Yes, yes, I shall see to all that. But, as you know, it is not necessary to have any speech-making"; and the Coroner readjusted his spectacles and talked for a moment to his officer. "When I have examined the witness, Mr Allen, and the jury have asked any questions they may wish to ask, I am quite willing that you should ask any questions that may seem proper—through me; or in fact to allow you to ask them directly—in order to save time. But that we shall see—that we shall see."

As in a dream she watched and listened. Dr Wren was sitting by her now. Witnesses were being examined—her own servants, one after another. It was strange to hear Mr Purvis making them swear in a wonderful archaic formula. There was no book to kiss, but there was a phrase about the day of judgment that she heard again and again and yet could not fix in her memory.

"Mr Foreman, have you any questions you wish to ask the witness?"

"No, Mr Coroner."

"Now Mr Allen?"

"No sir."

"Thank you. That will do," and Ruth left the witness box.

"Take care of the step," said Mr Purvis. He had said this to each witness.

What was most dreamlike was the knowledge of the Coroner and all these men. It was as though they too had lived at the Lodge for many years. It was as though, invisible, they had been always there, watching the quiet guarded life of the Lodge, waiting for it to end thus. The Coroner in truth did not seem to ask questions: he seemed to know everything that could be said, to be telling the witnesses what to say. He and his officer seemed to hold all secrets in their power.

"You are Mary Eliza Swithings—but stop a moment, it is written two ways here—Swithings or Swithins? With the G or without?"

"No G, sir," said Mr Purvis.

Grey, trembling Mary turned her piteous tear-stained face from one to another while they discussed the spelling of the name. She did not herself seem to know anything about it.

"*Swithins*, sir," said the Coroner's officer in a solemn authoritative voice.

"Very good. Well then—the last time you saw the deceased young lady alive was on the evening of the twenty-fourth at about nine fifteen? Yes. And you did not see her again till the morning of the twenty-fifth about nine o'clock—in the morning. . . . Yes, about then—perhaps a little earlier or a little later," and so on.

"Take your time," said the Coroner kindly. The witness, describing the occurrences of the morning, had burst into tears and was unable to answer a question. "You may sit down, you know—sit down and compose yourself."

And while Mary sobbed, the Coroner turned to the jury; and he and they together showed their incredible dreamlike knowledge.

"The room is on the first floor. Oh yes. . . . Where is the plan? Yes"; and papers were handed from one to another. "You understand, gentlemen, the alarm was given by the last witness, Sarah Hooper. Mary *Swithins* was

in fact downstairs, in the pantry, preparing the breakfast-tray. . . . Oh yes. Mr Stone will give us all information—but we shall not gain time by taking things out of their course. We are bound to go over all the ground more than once—but I have no wish to spin things out. But most haste often brings least speed. We shall move safest if we move in order, eh, Mr Allen?"

"Yes, sir. And as this is not by any means the first time I have been present in your court, sir, I can tell the gentlemen of the jury that you, sir, are never one to cut time to waste."

"Thank you, Mr Allen." The Coroner seemed gratified by the compliment, and henceforth he and Mr Allen were on very amicable, easy terms. "I do my best—in the interests of *all* parties, I hope. . . . Well, now," and he resumed his examination.

Mary and the other servants all told the same story. The young lady was of a happy and a bright disposition. Except for the toothache of which she had complained recently, and some time ago when she had been ill in bed for a few days, her health, so far as they knew, had been excellent.

"Very good—well, I think that will do. Thank you. . . . Mr Foreman, do you—but stop again. I should say, I intend, gentlemen, to recall this witness later on, when we come to this cupboard where the poisons were kept. . . . You have it—marked with a cross—ground floor—the work-room."

"I shall want," said a juryman, "to ask a many questions about that cupboard."

He was a sallow thin man on the back bench, and all the jury had turned to him.

"Very good. Your foreman will put any questions you like for you——"

"With your permission, sir," said Mr Allen, "I shall offer you a good deal of information about the cupboard, and its use and so forth. It is a scientific store really—used by Mr Burgoyne in his researches and er, general work——"

Mr Allen knew everything. They all knew everything.

"Very good, Mr Allen. But--later--as you say yourself. We will now get on."

"Take care of the step," said Mr Purvis.

Thus the long dream slowly unfolded itself. Dusk was falling now; the shadows were creeping into the room.

"Shall I 'ave the gas lit, sir?" asked Mr Purvis in a solemn voice.

"Well, scarcely yet, I think," said the Coroner, and he glanced at his watch and then looked at the reporters' table. "Surely not yet? You can all see, can't you, gentlemen?"

Then after a pause a perky little man answered from the bottom of the table.

"Well, sir, it isn't as you may say, blind man's holiday yet."

Unseen people in the shadows at the end of the room laughed.

"Silence," said Mr Purvis loudly. "Silence."

It was growing darker. She was thinking again. From where she sat she could see through the first window the ridge of the highest outhouse, blood-red now in the last light of the setting sun. Beyond the ridge of the slate roof, beneath, out of sight, was the paved yard, all grey and dark now, losing itself in shadow. Her hands shook. The poor lonely dog in the yard had begun to howl plaintively. The poor chained dog was afraid of the deepening shadows. Her hands were shaking as she thought again. Now would be the time for the ghost of the dead girl to glide through the locked door, to pass through the shadows above the dog's head, to rise through the air and show her face at the window.

Dr Wren was giving his evidence.

He was reading from a paper in his hand, reading in a firm low voice of how he had been called to the Lodge, of how he had found the body lying. . . .

. . . "As ordered by the Coroner, I have made a careful post-mortem examination, and have, as instructed, submitted

the contents of the stomach to analysis. . . . I discovered the presence of a lethal quantity of strychnia. . . .

"I am of opinion that death was the result of strychnine poisoning, the immediate cause of death being suffocation. . . ."

She was thinking now. This was what he had meant when he asked her to look at the dead form as it had been in life. This was why those two servants had wept and wrung their hands when the Coroner asked them the formal questions as to identification of what lay hidden in the brick shed. As she thought of all these common men gathered in the yard, talking together, going in and out of the door, an intolerable agony of grief and horror made her shake in every limb.

. . . "This would be quite natural. Death would occur during a paroxysm probably, from asphyxia. . . . The right side of the heart was congested; the left side, contracted and empty. The brain was congested; but I found no trace in the brain of any injury or disease. . . ."

"Silence. Silence."

The dressmaker's girl on the other side of the room was weeping noisily. She had been drawn here, perhaps by genuine sympathy, perhaps by morbid curiosity. Now she was sorry she had come. Now, in the darkening room, it was as though she had seen the ghost of the dead girl. She was making more and more noise. Soon, by the Coroner's direction, Mr Purvis took her out of the room.

While the girl was being removed, Dr Wren without leaving the witness-box had given Mr Allen a bottle of smelling-salts; and Mr Allen had carried it not to the sobbing girl but to Mrs Burgoyne. Now Mr Allen was leaning across the Coroner's desk, talking to the Coroner.

"Why, yes. Why, by all means. But, let me see. . . . Yes, Mr Allen. In my own room. That will be best—and then, if there is anything that it is important she should hear—why, she can come in again."

Then, while the Coroner nodded and smiled encouragingly,

Mrs Burgoyne and Stone were conducted through the door behind the dais, and invited to sit and wait in the little room into which this door opened.

"And now, if you please, Mr Purvis, we will have the artificial light."

They sat in the Coroner's room for a long time, in complete silence, listening to the confused drone of voices, in which only the nearest voice, the Coroner's, sounded at all clearly. Then the barmaid came up, lit the gas, and put tea-things on a table —a big black tray without a cloth, a huge brown tea-pot, several breakfast-cups, and a plate heaped with slices of cake.

"If you'll help yourself, ma'am," said the barmaid, "I'm sure he'd wish it. He'll be out himself any minute now"; and, lingering, the barmaid spoke sympathetically. "Poor dear young lady—I'm sure, ma'am, there's been more interest took in this inquest than what anyone can remember—yes, and sorrow too. You're anxious, I expect, about the verdict. . . . May I pour you out a cup? . . . It's always the same, ma'am. If she done it o' purpose, she never rightly knew what she was doing."

Then, on the sound of many footsteps, the barmaid ran down to her bar. The Coroner had adjourned the inquiry for fifteen minutes.

He was a good, kind man, the Coroner. He pressed her and Stone to drink some tea and eat some cake; and, as he stood with his back to the fire and drank his own tea, he did all that he could to lighten her ordeal.

"Most painful—must be. But we shall soon be through with it now."

While he ate his cake hastily, he talked to them as much as he could. Obviously he was seeking, while he chatted about his court and so forth, to relieve the strain, to prevent them from brooding in silence.

"Our courts, Mrs Burgoyne, are something quite apart—just handed down to us out of the past. Obsolete forms—and all that—strike one as odd in these days. But custom makes the law, doesn't it? Everything of course had its meaning

once : evolved—well, by the process of evolution, I suppose. Mr Burgoyne could tell us all about *that*. Mr Burgoyne's illness must add to the—great sadness of all this."

Then, pouring out another cup of tea, he addressed himself to Stone.

"I daresay our method of procedure seems strange—if you have ever had much to do with courts of law—rules of evidence and all that. We are quite informal—get at the truth in our own way—but still all in order, you know. The fact is, it is all left to our discretion. Where the inquiry is of a simple character—where there is no real doubt, as to-day, well, we take things quite simply — just a common-sense investigation.

"Of course if the matter is not simple, we change our method. For instance, in a case of manslaughter we screw up everything —quite to law-court style. No hearsay evidence admitted—an entirely different method. Unless of course I may myself have doubt, but am purposely avoiding anything to set people on their guard. . . . All that of course is what is meant by the Coroner's discretion. It is left to us. We are quite autocrats in our way. . . . Well then. . . ."

It was dreamlike again. She and Stone had returned to the big room. The gas was flaring ; steam was coming from the windows ; the atmosphere of the crowded room was becoming heavier and heavier. Without surprise, she observed that Dr Isaac Keeling was here now, sitting on the Coroner's right hand—an unexpected guest of honour. For an immense time everybody had been talking about the cupboard in the window, the bottles and jars, and the green bottle that held the strychnine solution.

Dr Wren, recalled, had told them that he himself prepared the solution about two years ago, and brought it to the house for a scientific experiment. Everyone had talked about scientific experiments, but no one seemed to wish to hear what this experiment had been. Dr Wren felt sure that the solution would not have evaporated. The strychnine would

not have been deposited in crystals at the bottom of the bottle. It was an actinic green bottle.

The shallow juryman had changed his seat. He was sitting in the front row next Mr Hind, the foreman, and he whispered and scribbled on bits of paper, and made Mr Hind ask questions. He was becoming more and more prominent.

No, said Dr Wren; it was improbable that Miss Vincent would drink the strychnine solution to allay the pain of the toothache. No, in Dr Wren's opinion, she did not drink it in mistake for something else.

Mary, recalled, had talked only of the key of the drawer. The shallow man and Mr Allen both asked her many questions. "The drawer did used to be locked—all the drawers did used to be locked once." She never touched the drawers, "No, nor any other servant." It was a rule of the house that no one should touch "the things like what the master used in his work."

"What I want to get at," said the shallow juryman, "is why all these deadly poisons was left where anyone could get at 'em. Why wasn't they in proper bottles, too?"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr Allen. "Where is the bottle itself? . . . Here! It is a green bottle, and here is the label—a poison label—clearly written—'Strychnine Solution. 1 to 200.' That, to my mind, is a very proper bottle."

"As it 'appens," said the juryman. "But what about the others?"

"The others do not concern us," said Mr Allen. "*This* is the bottle we have to think about."

"Yes," said the Coroner. "Mr Foreman, I think we need not trouble ourselves about the other bottles."

"Seems to me," said the juryman, "precious careless—the 'ole set out."

Mr Allen was being permitted to make something in the nature of a speech.

Mr Allen was describing the quiet life in the quiet room. This cupboard would have been out of place altogether in an ordinary library of a seaside villa; but here, in the workroom

of a great scientific gentleman, it was exactly what might be looked for. It was impossible to appreciate "off-hand" the nature of Mr Burgoyne's researches. It was sufficient to remind them that with the aid of a number of chemical preparations, including this strychnine, he carried on the most delicate and valuable scientific investigations. The house was a properly organised scientific establishment. Danger could not be anticipated "any more than in a hospital or a laboratory."

Most dreamlike. As they talked, it seemed that they had all been there invisible, year after year, watching the quiet life.

"Now—if you please—Mrs Burgoyne."

As in a dream she listened to those words about the day of judgment, as in a dream answered all the questions.

. . . "Exactly. She was fond of her home?"

"Yes."

"Several witnesses have spoken of her as being of a happy disposition. Do you concur in that—view?"

"Yes."

"So far as you know, she had no private troubles—worries?"

"No."

"She was naturally anxious about the health of her uncle—Mr Burgoyne?"

"Yes."

"But she had no cause for any other anxiety?"

"No."

"To employ the current phrase—there was nothing on her mind? . . . I mean, of course, so far as you know, there was nothing on her mind? . . . What? . . . No?"

"No."

"No. Your answer to my question Was there anything on her mind then is No. Exactly. . . . Won't you sit down, Mrs Burgoyne? . . . I am nearly done. . . . She was engaged to be married to Mr Stone. . . . Yes, and the engagement was generally approved? By Mr Burgoyne, yourself, and everyone concerned?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Yes. Then I think that is all, Mrs Burgoyne. Mr Foreman, do you——"

"Ask her," said the sallow man, "if there had been any quarrel between the young people."

"Very good. Mrs Burgoyne, you heard the question—will you reply? There had been no quarrel?"

"No."

"So far as you know," said the sallow man.

"Mr Allen, do you wish——"

"No thank you, sir."

Then she came back to her seat by the side of Stone.

"Seems to me," said the sallow man in a loud whisper, "we know as much about it as when we came into the room."

Stone had left her side. She was sitting alone now, listening to the words about the day of judgment, listening to his voice coming to her from an immense distance. The dream was unfolding itself very slowly. The questions were unending. They were taking him step by step from life to death: the last night of all, the morning, the discovery again, the bottles again, the cupboard again. Then back once more from death to life, from a paved yard hidden in darkness to love in a sunlit garden.

". . . Exactly. No date had been fixed for the wedding, but it was a settled thing that the wedding would take place sooner or later?"

"Yes."

"It was a regular engagement—approved by everybody?"

"Yes."

"There had been no quarrel—or estrangement?"

"No."

"I would like," said the sallow man, "to ask a question."

"Please do not interrupt me. Mr Foreman, I shall be glad if you can prevent interruptions. . . . Well now, Mr Stone. Where were we? . . . Yes. Well, then——"

"Seems to me," said the juryman, "my question comes in here."

"Silence," said Mr Purvis. "Silence."

"Write down the question," said the Coroner, "and give it to your foreman. You must not interrupt me. You'll find it will be quicker in the long run if you wait patiently till I have finished my examination of the witness. You will find I shall cover the ground, and probably ask the very question you are anticipating."

"Very good, sir. I only thought now was the time—that it came in here."

"That is entirely within my discretion. . . . Well, now," and the Coroner readjusted his spectacles and looked down at his papers. "Well then, Mr Stone, there was no estrangement of any sort between you?"

"No."

"There had been no lovers' quarrel?"

"No."

"You were both looking forward to the—the happy day? . . . I say you were both looking forward to the happy day?"

"Yes."

"Nothing had come between you, and nothing was likely to come between you?"

"No."

"Very good. Now—you understand I am only making everything clear. I can assure you, we all sympathise with you in this—this very sad bereavement. Well, then. You had given her no cause for uneasiness?"

"No cause."

"I will put it another way. Engaged young ladies are quick to harbour fancies—quick to fancy themselves slighted. So far as you knew, she had not any idea of this sort? . . . Well?"

"No."

"You had not observed any alteration in her demeanour towards you? . . . Well?"

"No."

"Very good. You were, I may take it, as fond of her as ever, and she was as fond of you. She had full confidence

in your intention to fulfil the marriage-contract in due course? . . . I say she had every confidence in your intention? . . . What is it, Mr Stone?"

His face was twitching horribly and he was staring at the nearest window.

"What is it, Mr Stone? Do you wish the window to be opened?"

The jurymen on both benches had turned round and were looking at the window.

"We are certainly," said the Coroner, "getting more than snug in here. Gentlemen, will you suffer any inconvenience if the window is opened—slightly? . . . Mr Stone, you may sit down, you know. Pray sit down and compose yourself."

A juryman, standing on the back bench, pulled down the top sash of the steaming window.

"That is better," said the Coroner. "We were getting far too snug in here."

The witness was sitting now. He had covered his face with his hands: now again he showed it, ghastly pale but no longer twitching, as he looked once more at the window and then dropped his eyes. Time was being given him to compose himself. The foreman had brought a slip of paper to the Coroner's desk, and the Coroner was talking in a low voice to Dr Keeling.

"Well, now, Mr Stone. One question—to sum up all the others. The current phrase! So far as *you* know, there was nothing on her mind. . . . Well? I am waiting for your answer."

"No."

"Very good. Thank you. Then, I think that will do——"

"What about my question?" asked the juryman.

"Mr Coroner," said Mr Hind. "I laid it there beside your papers."

"Come here will you, please," said the Coroner after a pause. "No, not you, Mr Hind. You, please."

Then the sallow man came to the desk, and he and the Coroner talked about the slip of paper.

"Quite unnecessary," the Coroner was telling the juryman. "Occasion useless distress—relatives. Utterly needless. . . . My discretion——"

"All right, sir," and the juryman, glancing towards the reporters' table, spoke very distinctly. "But I thought we were summoned here to get at the truth—not to 'ush up something," and he went back to his seat.

"You have no right to say that," said the Coroner. "That was a most improper remark."

"I only know I've been brought 'ere—most inconvenient afternoon in the week—leaving my business——"

"Yes," said another juryman. "But you ain't the only one. There's thirteen others."

"Do you," said the Coroner severely, "still urge me to ask the question? After what I have told you, do you still conscientiously desire it?"

"Please yourself," said the safflow man curtly. "I've said my say."

"I certainly shal not put the question in these words."

"I've said my say."

Then, after another pause, the Coroner asked the modified question.

"Mr Stone. You have heard our discussion. . . . I am to ask you—well, I will ask you: had there at any time been any acts of impropriety between you and the deceased?"

"I protest," cried Mr Allen, jumping to his feet. "I protest, sir, against that question as an outrage on humanity. I protest, sir. I protest in the strongest terms I——"

"That will do, Mr Allen. That will do. Gently, please. Gently."

And then the question was put again.

"No," said Stone hoarsely. "On my oath, no."

The Coroner looked at him sharply.

"All your answers have been on oath, you know. But you know that—of course."

"Now, sir," said Mr Allen. "You will allow me, I hope——"

"By all means."

Then Mr Allen provided words of indignation for the witness.

There never was a more monstrous suggestion. There was not one iota of truth in the suggestion. The witness held the deceased in reverential love. He had nothing to look back upon that he would recall. He had nothing in his heart now but grief.

"Very good," said the Coroner. "One moment, Mr Stone. Just now, when you used that expression—On your oath—you only wished to repel the suggestion in the most forcible manner that occurred to you at the moment?"

"Yes."

"You had no other meaning in employing those words?"

"No."

"Exactly. Just to express the strongest denial?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. That will do. And once again, Mr Stone, I will say what I know all really feel. You have our sincere sympathy in your loss."

They were sitting side by side again.

The Coroner in a chatty informal manner was telling the jury about the famous Dr Keeling—perhaps the greatest living authority on mental derangement. Dr Keeling was good enough to offer himself—to offer as an expert to aid them in their deliberations.

"No, no, Dr Keeling, don't go into the box. I don't propose to swear you. You know nothing about the case itself of course."

"Very little."

"No, I only want to ask your opinion. To see if you can throw any light on the matter for us. I suppose you pronounce in the course of the year on many hundreds of persons—whether they are sane or not?"

"Well," said Dr Keeling, "I am engaged with very many such cases."

Then in grave thoughtful tones Dr Keeling briefly told the court, that a person might be sane one hour and for all practical purposes insane the next. As a fact, when once

the mental balance was lost, the most healthy people did the most desperate things. The sense of proportion was gone ; the most trivial things seemed of paramount importance ; a small trouble would seem an unbearable burden. As a fact, this state might be purely temporary—of short duration. Pain such as toothache, acute anxiety, such as care for a relative dangerously ill, would be determining causes.

"I have met and conversed with this young lady on many occasions. I am sure that hers was an equable, a joyous temperament. She was a *steady* and a *wise* young lady. I have no hesitation in giving my opinion—from my observation of the young lady—that her mind must have been completely unhinged at the time of this—this deplorable occurrence."

"Thank you, Dr Keeling."

They were waiting again in the Coroner's room. Dr Wren had come to them and brought them from the big room. There was no need for them to listen any longer. Their ordeal was over. The Coroner was telling the jury what the verdict should be.

Soon now there came a shuffling of feet ; the sound of many voices mingling ; then silence, and the loud solemn voice of the Coroner's officer as he closed the court.

"Oyez, oyez, oyez."

Soon the little room was full of people—all talking. The dream voices had come very close to them. The Coroner talked to her—Dr Wren, and Dr Keeling. Mr Townley, the vicar, talked to her and pressed her hand.

The jury had given the usual verdict : the deceased had committed suicide while temporarily insane.

Side by side they walked along the high road and climbed the hill. He was not going back to the house, but he walked with her till they came to a point on the high road just above the sheltered hollow, quite close to her home. Here, by the lamp-post where the flagged pavement ends, he stopped to bid her good-bye.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye. Where are you going?"

"I don't know. Anywhere away from here. Anywhere that I can forget. I shall go mad if I don't forget it."

"You will stay in London to-night?"

"Yes. . . . I believe I am going mad. . . . You know I thought I saw her. I seemed to see her. I think I am going mad."

"You will write to me?"

"Yes, I'll write to you."

She sees his face in the lamplight. He is looking at her as though he does not see her—staring horribly, with a convulsive twitch about the mouth.

He does not touch her hand even—ere he goes. The dead hands are there—between them: one cold hand on his breast, one on hers.

XXVIII

A YEAR had gone by.

More than a year had passed, and Dr Keeling walking to the railway station with Wren told him that his wonderful faith was justified.

"Beyond our plummet-lines—eh, Wren? Above the law—stupendous!"

"But, Keeling, the memory?"

"Well, isn't it a blessing—in one way—if there are breaks still? Don't you worry. If much of the past has been dropped out—if it is gone for ever, is it worth regretting? Isn't it best—perhaps—for him? . . . It is miraculous as it is. Be content, old chap, with that"; and Dr Keeling smiled. "You have had your miracle—and you deserved a miracle; for verily your faith has been great."

And indeed in this long year it had seemed, day by day and week by week, that a miracle—nothing less than a miracle was happening. Slowly, very slowly, Richard Burgoyne was recovering.

In an hour—one February day when his wife was sitting near the foot of his bed—speech had returned. Thick, blundering—nevertheless, speech. Isolated words—names: Dr Wren, Emily, Nurse.

But behind the words there had been no discernible thought. This stage had lasted two months. Then there had come the stage of baby talk—and then it had seemed that all the past was gone. He was learning to talk once more, as an infant learns to talk for the first time. Most curious it had been to observe the progress. Step by step, in establishing the recall of speech, he had shown them the phases through which an infant passes in the acquisition of speech. He had begun with isolated words—substantives: "Drink," "Sleep," etc.

Then adjectives : "Kind Wren," "Fine day," etc. Then had come verb forms and linked ideas. Now he could recognise everybody, but still it seemed that the whole past was gone. To make him speak at all, a definite external stimulus was needed. He was quick to respond to the stimulus of spoken words. Sometimes it seemed that he could only echo words that he had heard. He said "Doctor Wren," "Nurse Emily," "Mrs Burgoyne." He could only echo, as an infant. Wren taught him to say "Sybil," not "Mrs Burgoyne"; to say "Wren," "George Wren," "George," but not "Doctor Wren." He never now said a name out of the past—never Effie.

All that Keeling, before the cerebral haemorrhage, had foretold as to the course of the slow retreat of the multiple neuritis was now being fulfilled. The symmetrical paralysis was remitting — the slow regeneration of the peripheral nerves was manifesting itself plainly. Tremors were perceptible; sensation was returning to the feet. Tinglings were leading to slight movements. The feet were moving. Power was slowly but surely returning to the lower limbs. With regard to the original ailment, the multiple neuritis, one might almost say that cure was now assured.

With regard to the later and far more serious trouble, the brain paralysis, one might say that no outward symptom could now be detected. The outgoing stimuli were plainly unimpeded to the right side. The right arm moved as freely, was as healthy as the left. There had been no wasting of muscles in arm or shoulder, no atrophic changes. There was no contraction of the fingers or wrist. In the facial muscles all signs of immobility had long disappeared. Outwardly there was nothing to tell the story of the brain lesion, except the speech defects. All possible diagnosis now was passing from the physical to the mental side. Henceforth they can only estimate the process of repair in the narrowed area of destruction by observing the process of restoration of his mental power.

Then, during another two or three months, it was known by all that the memory was working. The past was coming

back to him—in patches, brokenly, the past was returning. Intermittently he could remember things. One day he would give them the unmistakable sign. Then for a week, there would be no new sign. Then the signs would come faster and faster. All could see them: all must know now that he could look back into the past. But all who knew his history must realise that whole spaces in time, long series of incidents and emotions had been, apparently, obliterated for ever. Then, after what seemed a stationary condition, progress became more rapid. He was talking more freely. The thickness in articulation was lessening, but every now and then there came a curious muffled tone that always set Wren wondering. What was it? No matter. He was talking of the past. That was the great thing now. That was a hundred times more important now than clearness of articulation or resonance of tone.

“Wren. Where is Ruth?”

Suddenly he had asked about one of the old servants—a servant who never came into his room.

“She is somewhere downstairs, I believe.”

“Downstairs?”

“Yes, sir. Would you like to see Ruth?”

“No. Oh no . . . Ruth! Ruth is downstairs,” and he repeated the words. “Ruth is downstairs.”

This was one of the good signs. Ruth’s name had come to his lips without a primary external stimulus. Somehow he had thought of Ruth. The memory was working. Ruth had been flashed from within, or he had reached Ruth by a little chain of connected thought—and that was as good. There was no servant in the room to link herself with other servants. Such stimulus as external objects could have given him would only amount to this:—something might suggest the work of servants; then he might have thought of a servant—but that servant would probably have been Mary; then he might have thought of other servants, of Mary’s underlings, of Ruth. Thus the process might have been, and that is memory. Thus memory works.

For the last three months Dr Keeling had been down every fortnight. Dr Wren was very proud of the patient, but Dr Wren was very anxious.

They used to sit, one on each side of the bed, and stay with the patient, talking to the patient for an hour or more. Keeling called these interviews Memory-talks. Writing to Wren he said : "Many thanks for your last report. I will be down for another Memory-talk next Wednesday. Since you think I might help you, I should much like to be there when he opens up the bad time. But from what you tell me, it may come now at any minute, and as I can't be there always, it is a thousand to one I shall be out of the way when it does come. But don't worry. You'll be able to tackle it single-handed."

Blocks of time that had seemed to be obliterated were filling themselves with remembered incidents. Memory was working. The past was returning. Wren thought that the critical hour was near when the patient would speak of Effie, when the doctor would have to tell the patient of the granite cross in the cemetery on the hill.

The patient lay on his back with hands clasped across his breast, but now the knees were often raised. He could draw up his knees whenever he cared to do so. Sometimes, while Keeling talked to him, he would open his hands and with an easy gesture clasp them again behind his head. Always, while Keeling or Wren talked, his eyes watched the speaker. His eyes were full of intelligent, anxious interest. He listened with untiring attention, but he never smiled. Keeling would make little jokes—childish jests or worldly-wise reflections—and then would laugh cheerily, but the patient never responded with a smile.

"Well, sir, how are you to-day ?"

"I am better, Keeling."

"So Wren tells me—going on famously."

"On famously," the patient would echo.

"I came down in one of the slowest trains that ever ran. You couldn't call it running—it *crawled*."

"It crawled."

"They kept us twenty-five minutes in one station—that junction ten miles from here—on the other side of the downs. Wren, what's the name of that junction?"

"Let me see," says Wren. "What *is* that station, Keeling? Of course I know the one you mean."

"Slanes," says the patient. "Slanes Junction."

"Bravo. That was it, sir."

Keeling talks frequently of such common things as trains, and roads, and houses.

"I see they are building down by the river."

"The river?"

"What beggars they are to spoil every pretty view. Beastly ugly red boxes of bricks—a row of mean little houses—they have planted in the middle of a field. Too bad! When you take your first drive you'll find many changes in your old Whitebridge. You must prepare yourself for many changes."

"Changes."

"Yes. *Sad* changes, even. . . . What was I telling you? Oh yes—these horrid scamping builders. They have almost finished building these wretched houses in a couple of months."

"When I was a lad, Keeling—we used to call them jerry-builders—jerry-builders."

"That's what they're called still—jerry-builders! Capital. Ha, ha," and Dr Keeling laughs cheerily as though the patient had made an excellent joke.

But there is no response. Not a blink from the attentive eyes, not the faintest relaxation about the open lips. To this stimulus there is never a response. In all these interviews the sound of affected mirth evokes no imitative echo. That is curious, although it is of no particular importance.

The patient speaks voluntarily of the past often now. But what Wren is waiting for never comes. It should have come in these three months. The absence of inquiry is a bad sign.

It is more than time that a name, that two names should have come out of the past. So many names now have come. But these two names, never—never Stone and Effie.

On this walk to the station, Wren speaks more than once of

his anxiety. The bad sign mars all his pleasure, robs him of half his pride; and he would fain be restored in full confidence by friendly words from Keeling. But Keeling can only repeat what he has said already.

"Don't you worry yourself. Be content. Leave it as it is."

"You wouldn't prompt any more?"

"No. Leave it as it is."

"I think sometimes it would be best to bring it on—somehow—to get it over. Sometimes I don't know what to think."

"Leave it as it is. When he speaks of it—if he does speak of it, help him to pass on to something else. Don't let him dwell—at first. When he comes back to it again, help him again. Help him to get it slowly. That is all you can do."

"Keeling. I sometimes think it is there. It is there, but he *won't* speak of it. Is that possible? What do you think?"

"My dear chap, I don't venture to think. I regard him as your property. If you say so, I must bow to your decision," and Dr Keeling laughed pleasantly.

"But, Wren," and he jerked his head. "That woman! *There* is misery—great misery. She upsets me. I dread seeing her."

"She is much better than she was. I think she has borne up bravely—on the whole."

"Has she? She upsets me. I don't suppose you notice the change in her—as I do. When did I first come here? Not eighteen months ago! She was a girl—a nervous, high-strung girl. And *now!*"

Wren could only tell his *confrère* that Mrs Burgoyne's health was certainly better than it had been. Mrs Burgoyne had given Dr Wren considerable alarm at one period—five or six months ago. It had seemed that she was in danger of breaking down completely under the after effects of the shock of grief. But she had been brave: she had never spared herself: she had been a staunch assistant to Dr Wren throughout the year.

"Oh! . . . Wren, I must come back to my old question.

What is the matter with that woman? Is it nothing but grief—nothing else?"

Wren could only tell him of the depth of the grief.

"She was absolutely devoted to poor Miss Vincent. Beyond her husband—poor Effie was the world to her. You see, she came here quite as a child—and Mrs Burgoyne brought her up. To Mrs Burgoyne she was like a daughter, and like a sister too—companions. If you knew Mrs Burgoyne as I do, you would understand what Effie's death must mean to her—a natural death even."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, I never could understand her—from the very first. It upsets me now to talk to her. Great misery. **Very great misery!**"

XXIX

WITHOUT doubt the misery of Sybil Burgoyne had been very great. She had suffered a year's martyrdom of pain. She was alone in the silent house, alone with her husband, alone with her thoughts. She suffered—without respite.

He had begun to speak. Soon he would denounce her. Day after day she sat with him, and waited. Each time that he spoke, she thought that the moment had come. His thought was working: she, as well as Wren, could see the thought behind the anxious eyes. In a moment now the memory would leap into sudden life; he would fix his eyes upon her; he would say:

“I remember. But what have you done with Effie?”

He would denounce her and call her to account. From the picture of the cowering figure of his wife, he would pass on to the picture of the innocent figure of the dead girl. With such thought as his, when once those midnight hours returned to him, he would think out all that had followed. Who could hope to deceive *him*, when the thought was working? With infallible logic he would trace the fatal sequence of events from the recorded picture of guilt and shame to the unseen picture of despair and death. Thick and hurried would come the accusing words:

“I know what you have done to me. Now tell me what you have done to Effie.”

As each long day came to an end, she said to herself: “He does not know yet. Will he know to-morrow?” But she did not shun him, no matter how greatly she feared him. She sat with him, waiting through the days, waiting for her doom.

She suffered her martyrdom, as the long weeks crept by.

Another month gone and he does not know. It is night again and he has not remembered. But the night will drag through, and to-morrow's daylight will bring him the thought. To-morrow he will know : to-morrow the stumbling, labouring tongue will speak.

"I remember. This is what you have done to me. I know that your sin brought me to the gate of death. Now tell me if your sin drove Effie through the dark portal."

She would not shun him. It was her duty to be with him now as much as possible—Wren had told her so. Nurse Emily had been sent away and only the night nurse remained. In the day Mary and the mistress of the house nursed him. It is better for the patient that he should see the old familiar faces : they may help him to remember. And of all faces, the loved face of his wife is the one that should help him most. So this is her task—to nurse him and to wait patiently. Wren tells her all his thought in these early months of the long year. He wants her to be with her husband—because if suddenly he speaks of his loved niece, then the loved wife must sooth him in his sorrow. She will be the person who can help him most. That will be her task.

She obeyed all Wren's instructions. All this was when Dr Wren had praised her courage, had been surprised by the resistance she opposed to the shock of her grief. All this was before the time of which he had spoken to Keeling—the time when he had been alarmed.

In the morning—after the almost sleepless night—she would look at her face in the glass and study the print of pain. Thus nuns must have looked in the cold morning light many, many years ago. The eyes in the deepening orbits were dull ; the drawn lips seemed bloodless ; two upward lines had marked themselves more strongly between the dark brows ; over the hollows of the temples the coarse lustreless hair hung loose, with coarse grey strands beneath the dark tresses. Thus a nun must have looked after a night of pain hundreds of years—

a disgraced nun whom our Mother Superior has given into the hands of the travelling inquisitors. Our erring sister has been lying beneath the hands of the hooded men who have come to the convent to investigate all disorders. Sister Sybil has been "questioned," and brought back to the stone cell to repose herself. She has all the day to repose herself or to pray for courage: to-night they will question her again.

All day long, while with grey Mary's aid she guarded the sick-room and waited on the sick man, she thought of the past, and listened for the mumbled words that should tell her the past had come back.

"He seems brighter-like to-day," Mary would whisper.

Yes, to-day he will speak of Effie.

Effie, Effie, Effie! He must have heard the hoarse voice shouting the name at the locked door. The name is there, deep down beneath the anxious eyes. Ere night falls the name will rise to the surface, and sound on the toiling lips.

All day long the room reminds her of the past. Soon the room must remind him too. Here the dead girl used to sit, close to his pillow, prattling to him hour after hour. Sybil Burgoyne in imagination can hear the voice, faintly as it came to her through the curtained door when she stole away to meet her lover.

Looking down into the garden she sees it in imagination filled with children. That was years ago. Effie, as a child, has brought a chorus of children's voices. She was all love, and could not play on the sands with other children and not love them. She is there on the lawn in a blue pinafore, surrounded by her laughing band of sunburnt girls and boys. In imagination Sybil Burgoyne sees them. They are to have tea in the summer-house; they are to sit in the room above the wall, between sky and sea, and mingle clear young voices with the cry of white birds that wheel and swoop in a sunlit sky. All the world was young then—such a little while ago. This grey old servant even: haggard, grey-haired Mary! In imagination Sybil Burgoyne could see her, grim but kindly:

not really young, of course, but seeming not unpleasant of aspect, neat, homely, and comfortable, as she passes with a smile in the sunlight, carrying heavy trays towards the stone steps. Effie's parties never made her grumble: no extra work brought a sour face for Effie. She was all love, and all the world loved Effie.

After the long day, when Nurse Susan came on duty for the night, the mistress of the house would still linger.

Nurse Susan, flushed after a good dinner, used to come in and out of the room: gradually taking over command, whispering to Mary in the corridor, sending tired Mary up and downstairs to bring things that the professional nurse had perhaps forgotten.

"I think, ma'am, he is taking more notice this evening."

Yes, the night has not truly come. He may speak yet, ere he sleeps.

Through the curtained doorway Sybil Burgoyne glides in to her own room and is still waiting. At the sound of his voice, she returns. The nurse is talking to him about his pillows. Does he feel too high in the bed? Shall Nurse and Mrs Burgoyne help him to change his position? She lingers, assists the nurse, smooths his pillows, smooths the rug; then glides back through the curtains, and waits; and then once more returns.

Nurse Susan nods her head significantly. His hands are folded across his breast: he is sleeping now. One more day has come to an end and he has not remembered.

It was at night that she suffered most of all. In sweet May nights when the fragrance of white flowers came to her out of the darkness with the cool breath of the sea, and the faint murmur of the waves dragging on the beach was like the faint sound of a girl moaning in her sleep, her misery was very great indeed. All the world was sleeping peacefully, but if she slept it was to dream of pain.

In her dream she was lying beneath the hands of many strange men. She was helpless in the hands of cruel men

who were putting her to the question. In her dream she was being tortured because she would not tell her secret.

"Answer me," said the dream voice. "Had she a happy disposition?" and under the cruel pain she answered.

"Yes."

"Was she fond of her home?"

"Yes."

"Had she any cause for anxiety?" and the pain made her answer.

"Yes."

"Had she anything on her mind?"

"Yes."

"What had she on her mind? . . . Answer me. . . ."

She was afraid to sleep, because in sleep she must dream. Yet awake, she was shaken by terror—awake, she suffered the night terrors of a little child.

Sitting on her bed, afraid to lie down, she thought of the dead girl. Now would be the hour for the tired brain to work abnormally. Now, if ever, one might expect the nerves of vision and the nerves of hearing to play one false. Now, if ever, the weary nerves, craving for rest yet forced to work, might revenge themselves. Now would be the time for illusions—for hallucination.

If she saw anything abnormal, it would be a hallucination. She knows this, yet she dreads a hallucination. Jack had thought something . . . Jack had thought. . . .

In such hours as this, she thinks that Effie haunts the house—must do so. She is here now—walking in the corridor, pale and sad—coming to look at the sleeping man, coming to crouch and whisper in his ear—coming to tell the abominable story: to reinstate in the injured brain all that had been obliterated by the fountain of blood. The white-faced girl is here now. If one went out into the corridor one would see her—must see her. . . . Jack saw her.

"Effie. Effie," and the words are spoken aloud. "I loved you. I wish that I had died instead of you. . . . Effie. I would have died to save you."

It is as though the superstitious terror of that night in the dark workroom had made deep grooves in her brain for fear to flow in. When once the thought process has begun it must go on automatically: all the old terror must be repeated ere the stimulus fades and the nerves cease to act.

She is a materialist. She *knows*—it is more than a belief. In the daylight it is certainty. She knows what has happened to Effie—to the love, the bitter grief, the sick horror of her lover's treason: to all that made the sweet soul of the gentle, agonised girl. It is extinction. The snap of a lamp turned out with brutal haste—a transient flame lost in eternal darkness. All that was Effie lies in the graveyard on the hill: nothing that was Effie has escaped the tomb: nothing of the flame has been saved from the darkness. She *knows* that this is true.

Yet in her room, in the middle of the night, she stares at the door, hides her eyes, is choked with fear—sits for moments, frozen by fear, glaring at the locked door.

Effie is coming—not as she was, but as she is. The corpse is coming—the mutilated form bound in the white grave-clothes is coming to confront her—is coming as the paralysed man came, in defiance of nature's laws, setting reason at defiance, raised as in those miracles of Christ—the dead man walking.

She is coming.—Throwing off the load of earth, throwing off the load of stone, bursting lead and bursting oak, she is coming to the door. Trailing the grave-clothes, dropping earth, dropping splintered boards, she is coming through the darkness to the door—to break the lock, to break the bolt, to smash the flimsy door. . . .

Slowly Sybil Burgoyne recovers from the intolerable paroxysm of fear, and sits sobbing and shaking convulsively. Slowly she begins to think. She is going mad. This is to be her punishment. She is going mad.

The thought had come as an echo of Stone's words. The burden of her secret is driving her mad. She must tell her secret. It is an imperative need. She must share her secret—she must confess her sin.

To whom? To some woman? No. That is a night thought, a mad thought. A woman would betray her. No woman would be strong enough to help her.

To a priest? For a moment she thinks of the vicar. No. He cannot help her.

To Wren? Yes, to Wren—to no one else. She will go to him to-morrow. Not here—in the haunted house. Away from the house—somewhere, she will confess her guilt to Wren. She will ask him to share the secret, to help her bear the burden, to save her, if he can, from her punishment.

There is relief to the tired brain in the thought of it. With the decision, something of rest has come to the weary nerves. To-morrow—to-morrow she will confess. To-morrow—and for a little while she sleeps in peace.

It was the first time since the inquest that she had left the Lodge and the Lodge grounds. She had waited until late in the afternoon. Dr Wren was always at home after six o'clock. As she walked up Harbour Street men and women bowed to her: several would have stopped her. All the world stared at her in her black dress. Mrs Burgoyne had not been seen in Harbour Street for four months. The shop people stood in doorways, or came out on the narrow pavement to look at her white face and her black dress.

At the door of the modest little house at the top of Harbour Street, she glanced at her watch-bracelet. It was a quarter past six: she might be sure of finding Dr Wren now. For a moment she hesitated. The house was quiet: no sound of footsteps came to her from the little hall. No servant had seen her on the stone-flagged garden path. She need not ring the bell. She might turn away even now: no one had seen her.

No. She must tell him.

“Is Dr Wren at home?”

“Come in, ma’am,” said the doctor’s servant. “Step this way, please”; and the woman led her through the hall and ushered her into the doctor’s principal sitting-room—the

surgery-library in which he received his patients, in which he spent his evenings with book and pipe.

"If you'll be seated, ma'am, the doctor won't keep you waiting long," and the woman closed the door on her.

She stood at the window and looked out at the neglected patch of garden—a bachelor's garden, unloved, untended. The room was at the back of the house and was strangely silent. The doctor could sit here alone with his books, and no noise from the street could come to disturb him. Smacksmen and sailors could go lurching and singing past his door at ten o'clock, when the public-houses closed for the night, and he would not hear their drunken chorus. People coming from the Anchor Inn would not pass through Harbour Street. He had many books. On one side of the room the books made an unbroken wall. But she must not think of the books. She must concentrate her thoughts. She must think again of how she should tell him.

Now. His hand was on the door. The door had opened. No. It was the servant, who had returned, who was bringing the morning's newspaper.

"I thought you might like to look at the paper, ma'am, while you're waiting."

"Dr Wren is in, is he not?"

"He won't keep you long now, ma'am."

"But is he out, now?"

"Yes, ma'am. But we expect him every minute."

And the doctor's servant closed the door again. Doctors' servants—whatever their instructions may be—never let a patient go without seeing the master. This good woman had been the servant of Dr Wren's father, and she knew Mrs Burgoyne by sight—the great lady from the Lodge: except her husband, the most important patient in Whitebridge.

Mrs Burgoyne sat by the window, waiting.

How shall she tell him? It will be very difficult. It had seemed to be an easy thing, because it was a thing imperatively necessary. But it will be very difficult to tell him. He will not himself make it easy for her. She knows that he is

entirely without suspicion of the truth. He believes that love and anxiety had made poor Effie mad. He believes that, in spite of all his efforts to sustain her hope, the unhappy girl had despaired of her uncle's recovery : that this only was the cause of the tragedy. He believes in the verdict. He believes with Dr Keeling, that from brooding grief Effie had become temporarily insane ; that, in fear of seeing her uncle die, she had taken her own life. He will not help his visitor as she tells her story. He will not credit the truth at first. He will struggle not to believe : she must force him to believe the truth. It will be very difficult to tell him. She glanced at her watch-bracelet. She had been waiting twenty minutes. Should she go now ? Should she wait no longer ?

No. She must tell him.

How? She will say : "Dr Wren. I have come to you to help me." Then he will promise his aid, of course. He will ask what is the nature of the aid that he can offer, and in imagination she can hear his voice. Then she will say : "Dr Wren, I feel almost certain that I am going out of my mind." Then he will smile reassuringly ; he will perhaps shrug his shoulders ; his voice will be friendly, comforting, although he speaks lightly. He will say something like this : "Now I wonder what makes you think that, Mrs Burgoyne," and he will laugh perhaps, but he will be watching her face attentively. "Why on earth should you think you are going out of your mind?" Then she will say : "Because——" and then she will tell him all the truth.

She waited an immense time. It was seven o'clock ; it was a quarter past : it was nearly eight o'clock. Oh, why did he not come? The garden was losing itself in shadow ; the room was growing darker ; dusky curtains were hiding the wall of books. The room was silent as the grave. Suddenly she began to shiver.

She would wait no longer—she could wait no longer. She would not summon the servant, or leave any message. She would go softly into the hall and let herself out of the house as quickly as possible—evading the servant, getting away as quickly as she could.

Then, as she stood on the threshold of the room, the outer door opened; Wren's voice sounded cheerfully as he called for light. The servant came into the hall with a lamp, and the visitor drew back. She was too late. She could not get away now without talking to Dr Wren.

"Mrs Burgoyne here? . . . How long? . . . Oh, good gracious! . . . Take the lamp in."

At the sound of his voice, at the sight of him as he followed the servant into the lamp-lit room, she knew that she would not tell him. Had they left the lamp outside, she might have told him. Had he come to her in the darkening room, she might have been forced to tell him.

"My dear Mrs Burgoyne, I really am ashamed of myself." Then, as the servant went out: "But why have you waited here? My stupid Clements ought to have sent for me. What is it? Nothing wrong since I saw him, I hope?"

"No."

"But you are anxious—you wanted to see me?"

"Yes. I wanted to see you."

"Do sit down, Mrs Burgoyne. It was not about him at all, perhaps? Something about yourself?"

His voice was friendly and full of comfort. He was looking at her exactly as she had imagined that he would look at her—very attentively, while he smiled. But she knew now that she never could have told him.

"Take this chair, and let us have a quiet chat—about yourself, isn't it? *He* is doing splendidly. . . . But you, you are—you have felt not quite—— Do tell me all about it."

"Oh, it's nothing, really. But—but, Dr Wren," and she spoke fast and eagerly. "I can't sleep. I can hardly sleep at all. And when I do sleep I'm always dreaming. . . . Give me something to make me sleep. Can you? Give me something that will make me sleep to-night directly I go to bed—sleep without dreaming."

"Oh yes," said Dr Wren. "Certainly. We'll use a little trional—or something else. I'll send it up to you. Oh yes," and he smiled reassuringly. "We mustn't have you sleepless

at night after all the fatigue of the day. No, I can't have my best nurse laid up. No, don't run away. Do sit down and let us have a good talk over everything."

He would not let her go. He compelled her to remain and to talk to him; and, while they talked, he was watching her. She was trembling. He would not let her go. Could it be possible that something in her manner had aroused his suspicion? Could it be possible that he would now force her to confess—wrest the secret from her in spite of herself?

"Do tell me all about it. How long has this been going on?"

"Oh, not very long. Really, I oughtn't to have troubled you. But I thought I might as well ask you for a sleeping draught."

"Exactly. Quite right. You know, people are apt to exaggerate the harmful effects of sleeplessness. Of course there is nothing more annoying—harassing; but, you know, Mrs Burgoyne, that's all. It isn't dangerous, of course," and again he smiled. "But about these dreams—these worrying dreams? Do tell me."

"Oh, Dr Wren—it is nothing—really. I—I have not been a good sleeper for years."

"And a dreamer? Do you habitually dream? You know—they say some people never dream."

"Oh, I have always dreamt."

"Yes. So have I," and he laughed cheerfully. "The most ridiculous dreams—nightmare, even—making one wake more tired than when one went to bed. Is that how it has been with you?"

"Yes."

"All sorts of dreams?"

"Yes."

"Not the same dream, night after night? . . . That sometimes happens, when one is run down, you know. Has that happened to you?"

"No. . . . Not the same dream."

He would not let her go. He kept her in the lamp-lit room making her talk. But, somehow, after a little while,

she was conscious of comfort. He had no suspicion. Her secret was safe. He was only the kind and careful doctor, omniscient as to all outward signs, blind to all inward meaning. She never could have told him. It was a night thought, a mad thought only. Now the sound of his voice was comforting her; the little friendly chat—the necessity of speaking—was calming her.

"You must go out, Mrs Burgoyne. You must be out in the open air—for two hours every day. We must arrange it. You have been too much a prisoner."

"I can walk in the garden sometimes. I don't want to go outside the garden."

"But you really must. You must go for walks. Isn't there anybody whom you would care to walk with now and then? Any old friend—a really old friend? Mrs Townley?"

"Oh no."

"No. Not Mrs Townley," and Dr Wren laughed. "But perhaps you will be able to think of someone else. It demands so much less initiative if someone drags one out—as it were. You have been a splendid nurse. But the best of nurses need some fresh air."

When he opened the door of the room, there came a heavy smell of cooking. In another lamp-lit room one end of a table was laid for the doctor's dinner—the bachelor's unconsidered, ill-devised meal. To-night the doctor's chop would be more uninteresting than ever—hastily cooked and then slowly destroyed by half-an-hour's storage in an oven. But the bachelor doctor was in no hurry for his solitary repast.

"Oh, Mrs Burgoyne—something I meant to speak of," and again he closed the door upon her. "I wanted to tell you about that poor fellow, Jack Stone."

"Yes."

"I heard from him to-day. He wrote to me from London. He is still in London."

He had never written to her. He had said that he would write, and she had thought that he would do so. But in four long months he had never written.

"You know, that money——" Dr Wren had gone to his writing-table and was unlocking a drawer. "That money which you so kindly—well, he has sent it back—he has sent it all back." Dr Wren had found the letter and was unfolding it. "May I give you the notes now?"

"Does he say why he sent it back?"

"Yes, he does not need it. He says, he has not exhausted his savings—but he begs me to thank you." Dr Wren was reading the letter now. "Yes—'to thank Mrs Burgoyne very sincerely.' I won't give you his letter—because it is full of medical details." He had put the bank notes in another envelope, and now he handed this envelope to her.

"Has that doctor—your friend—seen him?"

"Yes. And another friend. Poor Jack! He says they are trying for an appointment as ship's doctor—the Royal Mail line. He says they are almost sure now that he will get it."

"Will that be—good for him?"

"I think it is altogether the best thing he could do. You know, Mrs Burgoyne, I am afraid—I am afraid that his health is completely gone. Poor Jack."

Dr Wren, oblivious of the waiting dinner, escorted Mrs Burgoyne back to her home.

"Good-night, Mrs Burgoyne. I won't forget the trional—and listen. You are going to sleep well to-night. There. You may take that as a hypnotic command. You could not disobey it if you wished to," and he laughed cheerfully. "Good-night—and pleasant dreams."

No one could help her. She was alone in the silent house, alone with her husband, alone with her thoughts.

XXX

THE weeks are gliding now. It is a year and a half since her husband's voice was heard once more in the sick-room. In the last three months progress has been steadily maintained: the patient can turn in his bed without assistance: sleeping, the patient lies now on this side, now on that. Dreaming, the patient can mutter now as dream thoughts ebb and flow. Dreaming of the past, he may move restlessly, raise his hands, fling off the shawl that his wife has put about his shoulders; then, turning himself, he can mutter until he sinks again into dreamless slumber.

The past is coming back to him, awake and asleep. Does he know yet? So much of the past has come back—but not yet the hour before his right arm dropped and he fell forward across the couch. It may come back in a dream. Watching him as he mutters in his sleep, his wife often thinks of this. It may return first of all in a dream. When he wakes he will remember the ugly dream. Then he will think of it—all through the day perhaps. From what material could he have built such an ugly dream? He will think of it until all is clear.

Dr Wren, delighted by the steady progress of the patient, is again somewhat alarmed about the health of Mrs Burgoyne. She listens to advice, but will not act upon it. While obeying his lightest word in regard to the patient, she has persistently disobeyed him in all that concerns herself. She will not leave the house: she will not take sufficient air and exercise. She says that she is very well: she has nothing to complain of. Not want of sleep, nor want of appetite, nor want of energy.

"Mrs Burgoyne, this really won't do. You really must go out."

As he looks at her, he sees the change that Keeling had

spoken of six months ago. The change is great. One would say that she was ten years, perhaps fifteen years older than when her husband's illness first began.

"I do go out in the garden."

"Yes, but that's not enough. There is no reason for you to stay with him so much now. You have done grandly for him—but the time has arrived for you to think of yourself."

"I am all right. I like to be with him most of the day."

She absolutely refuses to entertain the idea of resuming her bicycle rides. The bicycle has rusted : she will never use it again. She will not drive—until her husband is well enough to drive with her. She would not care for walking by herself.

"Mrs Burgoyne, I really shall have to send someone to take you out for walks. May I tell Miss Granger to come and call for you to-morrow morning ?"

"Miss Granger? No, please don't do that."

Then Dr Wren pleads for an admission of the merits of Miss Granger.

"You don't know how kind she is really—how sympathetic. She, too, is mourning, you know. Since her mother's death, she has been softened by sorrow. She is not frivolous—as they used to say she was—once. I am sure you would find her a sympathetic companion."

"I was very sorry to hear of her mother's death."

But nothing will persuade Mrs Burgoyne to accept poor sorrowful Miss Granger as a companion for walking exercise.

One day Dr Wren has a very grave face as he comes out of the sick-room. He has been with the patient for a long time, and Mary and her mistress are both waiting in the corridor when the interview ends.

It has been a painful interview, and throughout it Wren has heard the muffled note. Is that note only sorrow—nothing to do with the injured instrument? The patient has been speaking of Effie.

"What did you tell him?"

"That she died very suddenly."

"Did he ask many questions?"

"No. But he talked about her—and he wept."

"Did he ask where she was buried?"

"No."

"Did he speak of Jack?"

"No, not once."

"Did he ask how she died?"

"No. . . . Mrs Burgoyne—*you* have never told him, have you?"

"Never."

"No—it occurred to me that—perhaps—he had talked with you—and then asked *you* not to speak of it—to me, or anyone else."

"No."

"This is why I thought of that—because he begged me never to speak to him again—of Effie. And he asked me so few questions. . . . Do you think the nurse—Nurse Susan can have told him anything—or Mary?"

"No. I don't think so. I feel sure not."

"I'll tell you the truth. I was startled by his manner—more than by what he said. He gave me this impression—that someone has told him. . . . I wonder if Nurse Susan can be trusted?—I have trusted her till now. But, do you know, I think we'd better send Nurse Susan about her business. I think it will be safest. We'll run no risks we can avoid. . . . And, Mrs Burgoyne—I would be guided, if I were you, by what he said to me. . . . I don't like to advise you on such a subject, because the bond of sympathy between you two is so strong—so very strong. But he begged me not to speak of it again. I think—if I may say so—that you should be guided by that, and wait for him to speak of her—and not offer consolation till he does speak."

Then she returns to the sick-room, sits by the bedside, waits. But he does not speak of the dead girl. Effie has come to him out of the past, but he does not speak of her again.

For a week she thought that he had begun to remember the fatal hour before the seizure. For one whole day she thought that he knew all.

On this long summer day she dared not remain alone with him. She went in and out of the sick-room only when Mary was there. She dared not meet his eyes. She dared not sit by the bedside and wait for the words of doom.

It was evening, and she was in the garden, when Mary came to her.

"The master is restless, and wants you, ma'am."

Now. The hour has come—and she goes to hear her doom.

But he looks at her attentively, takes her hand, and pats it; and, when he speaks there is no anger in his voice: there is only that muffled tone—the note of sadness or the defect in the organ itself—which she, as well as Wren, has learnt to know.

"Kind Sybil! . . . Do you mind? . . . Lonely—very lonely."

He has not remembered.

So much has come back—but not this. Perhaps he never will remember. Never again will she shun him. No matter what she suffers, she will not spare herself. And once again all her thought is a prayer.

Not for herself, but for his sake. Let him not remember. Let him not remember.

The months were gliding now.

Nurse Susan had been sent back to London, and another nurse had been obtained. Dr Wren suggested that they should engage a man-nurse. A man would be more useful than a woman now; a man could lift the patient out of bed, and support him as he moved from the bed to his chair. But the patient said no; he would not engage a man. Let Wren get another woman; let him tell the woman that her services would only be required for a month or two.

For a part of each day the patient, wrapped in his rugs, sat in a chair close to the window, and looked down into his garden or across his walled garden to the open sea. Soon now they would think of dressing the patient and carrying him downstairs, putting him in a bath-chair and wheeling him about the garden.

In consultation with the mistress of the house, Dr Wren worked out a very convenient arrangement. They would change the patient's room. The morning-room should be converted into his bedroom : then when they carried him down for the first time they would install him permanently on the ground floor. This would be very convenient : he would be able to move from room to room on one level so easily and comfortably. Thus the new arrangement was planned and all was ready to effect the change, when they told the patient of the doctor's forethought. But then the patient said no.

"The morning-room? No."

He was looking out of the window, and Dr Wren urged him to consider how advantageous was the proposal.

"Do you really mean that, sir? I really think you would be more comfortable down there. Think how jolly it would be to go straight out into the garden—without any trouble."

"No. You are very kind—always kind, Wren. But I should not be comfortable in that room."

"All right, sir," said Wren jovially. "You must have it your own way of course."

Wren is almost bursting with pride and pleasure as the months glide on. This refusal is a good sign. Good signs now every day : and no bad signs. Power is coming fast to the patient ; thought is coming fast to him. He can think for himself now. It is no longer possible to plan his life and impart the wise plan to him at the last moment.

He says no again when Wren returns to the subject of a male attendant.

"I don't mean a nurse, sir. I mean a regular servant—valet. Some trustworthy fellow whom you could make your body-servant. I'm sure you'd find the comfort of a good

servant—to brush your clothes and all the rest of it—help you dressing, perhaps—and give you an arm as you go up and down the stairs."

"No. I don't like strange faces. No thank you, Wren. If I need aid of that kind—I can get Jenkinson, or any of the gardeners, to come in and lend me a hand."

It is wonderful to hear him talking. Long sentences are given without a break sometimes—smoothly, flowingly, sometimes. With all the available force of the great brain he is striving to speak correctly and fluently. Pride and admiration make Dr Wren's face glow.

Most wonderful of all is it to hear him practising speech. Of a morning his wife stands motionless in her room, and listens to his voice on the other side of the closed door. Every morning he recites poetry: simple little pieces such as children lisp. He has asked for a certain book from the shelf in the morning-room—a shabby little cloth volume of Wordsworth's verse. The book belonged to Effie. As a child she learned pastorals out of this book, and would recite them to her uncle and earn Uncle Richard's praise both for memory and elocution.

With some trifling aid he can dress himself now; and, as soon as the new Nurse Catharine has left him, he begins to recite, continues to recite until very slowly he has dressed himself. And so long as he recites, his wife must listen.

" My playmate thou shalt be ; and when the wind is cold,
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.
It will not, will not rest !—Poor creature ! can it be
That 'tis thy mother's heart which is working so in thee ?
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,
. . . And dre—dre—dre . . . and—dreams of things . . .
which thou canst neither see nor hear."

That line always gives him trouble. Again and again he repeats it—morning after morning he struggles with this particular line. But it seems that he will never conquer the difficulty. At this point always memory fails him, or the words themselves baffle his effort.

It is wonderful to hear, wonderful to think of. This white-

haired old man on his seventy-fifth birthday is doggedly setting himself a child's lesson, is laboriously learning the baby verses that were lisped by Effie years and years ago. It is as though he had summoned out of the past the ghost of the loved child to help him in his strange necessity. When he pauses to give rest to the toiling, blundering tongue, his wife can hear the other voice—that sweet child-music for which the poet wrote his words.

Doggedly the reciter perseveres in his attack upon the baffling line. Morning after morning, week after week, he perseveres; and at last, one morning, the listener starts, puts her hand to her breast. The line has been mastered. There is a perceptible pause, as if for concentration of effort, before the line, but the line is recited without a hitch.

“And dreams of things which thou canst neither see nor hear.”

Slowly and cautiously Dr Wren and Jenkinson carried him in his chair one afternoon along the corridor, down the stairs into the hall.

“Now stop. No farther. Let me walk . . . Sybil !”

Then, between his wife and Dr Wren, he walked down the passage into the workroom.

“Well done, sir. Splendid. Shake hands, will you, sir?”

The doctor's face was glowing; his heart was beating joyously: pride and pleasure shone from his eyes. The patient has returned to the empty arm-chair. The doctor's faith has been justified. All his life the doctor will thrill with pride and joy as he thinks of this day.

Soon Mary and Sarah came to move a table to the hearth, to lay the cloth, and bring them tea. On this first happy day the patient must not be allowed to stay downstairs too long. It had been arranged that he should come down to tea, sit for an hour or so in his disused workroom, and then be carried back to his bedroom to rest after what might be perhaps an emotional as well as a bodily fatigue. Dr Wren, bidden to drink tea with the patient, would remain in the house, on

guard: though perhaps he might leave the husband and wife alone together after tea. The doctor did not desire to be intrusive—to thrust himself between husband and wife in this happy hour. But the doctor would be here with Jenkinson to carry the patient upstairs again.

"Well, sir. Not tired, I hope?"

Dr Wren had come back to the workroom. All had gone happily and propitiously. There were no signs of distress—physical or mental. But now the time had come to get the patient back to bed. Dr Wren, standing on the hearthrug where he had stood facing those solemn talking men, looked down at his patient with glowing eyes, rubbed his hands, and laughed.

"No. I am not tired."

Then, when Mrs Burgoyne went upstairs to ascertain that all was ready for the patient's reception, Dr Wren tested the patient's memory.

"If you are sure you are not tired, I'd like to tax your memory. How are you getting on that way?"

"Slowly—but I think well. I am picking up the broken threads."

"Well, sir, do you remember something you once said to me about a certain lady?"

"Miss Granger?"

"Yes, sir. Can you recall the circumstances of a conversation we once had?"

The patient lifted his hand to his forehead with a troubled gesture; and, as he spoke again, the muffled note sounded very plainly.

"Yes, Wren. . . . You and I talked—one night—in the hall."

Wren understands. It was the night of the betrothal dinner. The recollection has roused a thought of Effie. He is almost sure now. The muffled tone has a mental not a physical cause. It is not a failure of the organ itself: it is only the note of sadness sounded perhaps unconsciously.

"Well, sir, what you foretold is about to happen."

"Yes."

"You heard of her mother's death. She is all alone now. We are going to be married."

"Yes—George. George, my dear fellow, she will make you a good wife. You will be very happy."

"I will do my best."

"Yes," and Richard Burgoyne shades his eyes with his hand, and looks into the fireless grate as he used to look into the heart of the red coals. "Yes, George. You are almost of the same age. You have both lived through the dreams of youth. Nothing will ever come to divide you. It is a natural alliance—a wise alliance. You will be very happy."

He spent his days now in the big room with his wife as constant companion.

For her the room was haunted. To live in it again was to pass again through the worst of her misery. The room became a part of her punishment. Everything here can remind her of the past: surely something here must remind him. When he glanced at the cupboard in the window, she thought that he would speak of Stone; when he glanced at the door, she thought that he had remembered the broken bolt. It was terrible to her to be in the room always now; but it was a part of her punishment and she would not shun it.

Leaning on her arm, he would walk about the room from wall to wall, pausing to look at the books on the shelves or at his collection of portraits—the men, like himself, who had lived for truth, the band of great thinkers of whom he and one other alone survived. With his hand upon her arm, he would pause and look attentively at the calm dead faces, as though in thought asking them to aid him in the recovery of all his old power.

But the months passed and he never spoke to her of Stone or of Effie. Sometimes now he gave a surprising evidence of his complete recollection of people and events, and again he showed by an unexpected failure that much was still forgotten.

"Frodsham!" He had been reading, and he looked up from his book and turned to her. "Frodsham. Sybil, what is his name?"

"Lord Frodsham? It was the same name as the title—Frodsham."

"No. I mean his Christian name."

"Thomas."

"Yes. Tom Frodsham. Tom? How is Tom Frodsham?"

"I am sorry to say Lord Frodsham is dead. He died—while you were ill—a year ago."

"Dead? Tom Frodsham—dead. I, too, am very sorry. . . . He and I were at Oxford together"; and he closed his book and sat musing for a long time.

To and fro he used to pace the big room, when at last he ventured to walk unaided. At first he watched his feet, as an infant watches each movement when it is learning to walk. He was learning to walk again, doggedly struggling to overcome a defect in the movements of one leg that was perceptible to all who observed him. He would walk thus again and again in each day, patiently, bravely struggling by careful practice to recover the lost control. He never made allusion to the defect or to his efforts to master it.

"Wren," he asked one day. "How soon now will you withdraw your embargo? When are you to tell me that I may get back to my work?"

"Well, sir. Don't hurry. You are doing famously. Take it easy a little longer."

"I am taking it very easily."

"I don't know about that, sir. Mrs Burgoyne tells me that you read a great deal—and the books you are reading now have never been supposed to be easy reading."

Dr Wren, as he said this, laughed and looked for the response that never came. Richard Burgoyne smiled sometimes now. As he read, a smile came about his lips sometimes: a smile of approval or questioning doubt in response to the author's appeal; but he had no smile of mirth to give in response to appeals from Wren.

The books of which Wren had spoken were the works of Richard Burgoyné. Day after day for months now, the author read his own books. Slowly and patiently he toiled through the closely-printed pages of the great volumes. He never talked of this labour or in any way explained it. But it was obvious to Wren—there could in fact be no doubt that he was doggedly toiling to recover the old mental store: to work himself back to the point where the break in thought had occurred.

"Sybil," he said once, as he laid down the *Causes and Consequences*. "If—if I am able to work again—will you help me?"

"Yes."

"Wren says that I must be careful."

"Yes. Dr Wren is most anxious that you should be very careful—not to tire yourself."

"Wren has advised me to engage a secretary—a man who knows shorthand—and can do typewriting."

"Yes. He thinks that would be best—to save you time. So that if you wanted to dictate—it could be taken down rapidly."

"I do not like the idea. I do not like the idea of a strange face"; and he shaded his eyes. "No . . . Sybil. I need only your help. Will you give it to me?"

"Yes."

He was taking more and more interest in his reading. He had almost done with the works of Richard Burgoyné now. Sometimes he sat surrounded with the many volumes that his wife, at his request, had brought from the shelves. He dipped here and there into a volume, put it down to open another volume, and again took it up. He was comparing passages, following threads of thought through many minds; he was practising the old use of the working tools.

At last he asked for one of his big portfolios—the garnered treasure of notes.

"Sybil. The portfolios. . . . See in the portfolio labelled philol—philol—philol—— Sybil. What is that word?"

"Philology?"

"Yes, philology, philology. See Philology. Under A—'Aryan races. *Max Müller's slip.* 1869.' . . . Have you found it?"

"Yes."

"Is that the date?"

"Yes. Sixty-nine."

"Good. Nearly all my keys are on the bunch."

"Your keys?"

"Never mind, Sybil. Read it, will you?"

It is three years exactly from the beginning of his illness when he takes up his pencil.

It is a bright September day; and though a wood fire is burning, the windows are open, and sunshine fights the fire. She is seated at her desk, when suddenly there comes the sound that she remembers, and she looks up. He is writing; and he writes all the morning.

With a jerk, as of clockwork running down, the pencil stops. He has been working hard, filling many sheets. He has worked to the utmost limit of his force, and is tired. She aids him, as he goes from the arm-chair to lie down on the leather couch, arranges the rug about him, reads to him from *The Times* until he begins to doze.

Then, that day, after tea he sends her to her desk.

"Sybil. Are you ready? Can you help me now? Take your paper—the large sheets. . . . Begin:—

"*Where Light may Come*—

"That is the title. I want you to make my time-table . . . Sybil, it is quite a short book—a light and easy task—purely speculative. No tiring thought in it. I think it will help me to get back into my stride."

Then, reading his pencilled notes, he dictates in a firm, clear voice.

XXXI

THE seasons were gliding now.

The quiet life was going on once more. Work in the quiet room, rest in the quiet room, and then again the work. Gladness, hope had gone from the house; only thought and the work of thought remained.

To Sybil Burgoyne had come apathy after long-continued pain, but as yet no sense of peace. She was the servant of this old thinking man—his meek, heart-broken slave. Watching him, waiting on him, she felt no fear now: she felt only the infinite overpowering sadness that had been with her fitfully in each year since early girlhood, that was with her now always. But day by day the work itself calmed her, soothed her. This is her task. It is her task and not her punishment. Her punishment is in memory: her only ease comes in forgetfulness. For a little while only, when she is working for him, she may forget.

It was a day in spring and they were driving. He had stopped the carriage and had talked to fishermen mending nets on the stone causeway near the swing-bridge. They drove every afternoon in the victoria from Mr Benson's yard that had been permanently retained for the service of the Lodge; and all Whitebridge understood that the drive had taken the place of the walk in the order of the days. Now was the hour for visitors to gape at the great man, now was the chance for amateur photographers.

"Where next, ma'am?" said Sturgess, Mr Benson's well-known trustworthy driver. "'Longside the river and home over the down?'

The west wind was blowing; daffodils behind the white rails of a fisherman's garden swung on their long stalks; little waves

broke and bubbled across the yellow sands ; and, beyond the ridges of foam, brown-sailed boats were scudding fast upon the silver plain. The wind that seemed pleasant and kindly down here by the harbour, might prove too strong for comfort up there on the high ground. Mrs Burgoyne, considering the wind, was afraid of the hill roads.

But, unexpectedly, her husband to-day gave Sturgess directions.

“Take us up to the church—past the church.”

“Don’t you think it will be too cold that way ?”

“No,” he said thoughtfully. “I want to go there. We can come down—afterwards—if it is cold.”

Throughout the long climb to the church he did not speak. Men and women bowed to them, but he appeared to be unconscious of these civilities. It was as if he had suddenly lost himself in deep thought.

Beyond the old churchyard lay the modern cemetery, but she did not guess his purpose until he told the driver to stop at the gate. Sturgess got down from the box and helped him to alight. His wife stood by the carriage wheel waiting to assist him, but he leaned on the driver’s shoulder, not on hers. It seemed almost as though he did not see her, as though suddenly he had forgotten that she was with him, as though because of his own absorbing thought all that surrounded him had been deprived of substance or had become unreal to him. Without looking at her he pushed the iron gate, and entered the cemetery, and walked up a gravel path by the side of the low wall of the churchyard. For a moment she hesitated and then followed him. She had been here often, but he had never been here. Yet he knew the way to the grave. He had not at first asked where Effie was buried—Wren had said so. But, perhaps, lately, he had talked to Wren about the grave : he had never talked to her. As a man walking in his sleep, as a man guided by a dream thought, he walked amidst the tombstones to Effie’s grave.

He stood bareheaded before the granite cross ; and slowly, unchecked, his tears fell as he read the inscription devised by George Wren.

"Effie Vincent. Beloved niece of Richard Burgoyne.
Aged 20."

On the other side of the wall children in white pinafores were playing among the old neglected graves, plucking the strong young grass, making garlands or chains of daisies ; at a little distance children in black frocks were busy about a newly made grave, putting fresh flowers in a metal frame, carefully removing withered blossoms and a litter of dried moss. In a field a man was singing as he drove the plough ; and seabirds followed the man and his horses, swooping into the turned furrow and rising with harsh cries to flash their white wings in the sunlight. All around was life and the promise of life. Nature far and near was waking from her sleep. Only here on all the wide down, in this narrow garden of death, could one think of eternal sleep.

Across Effie's grave Sybil Burgoyne watched her husband ; and, watching him, thought of her father's funeral—of how she had looked at him then across a grave and seen him weeping. How many years ago ? Yesterday. As she thought of it, time and all sense of time had gone. She could see him as he was then, when she looked at him through her own tears. She could see him as he was now, only when she dried her eyes, and, drawing back from the grave, stood waiting for him.

Then she saw all the change in him. He seemed a shorter and a slighter man. He was white-haired, but that was nothing. He had always stooped, and now he stooped a little more—that was natural. He had been a solid, massively grand man : now he was a fragile man. As he came to her on the pathway, she saw all the change more and more clearly. His face had been nobly rugged in outline, full of power : now all the force seemed to have gone except as it showed itself—subtly changed even here—in the clear blue eyes. But the other features were refined, softened, lessened : it was a narrower face, smooth of texture, white and frail as carved ivory. Yet still he was splendid in his dignity—not with the dignity of strength, but rather the pathetic stateliness

thrown by the mind itself about the weakness of the bodily frame.

He looked at her as though he did not see her. It seemed as if, completely lost in thought, he had forgotten her existence.

"Richard!"

He would have passed her on the path : as a dream-walker unconscious of all but the dream, he would have passed by without seeming to see her. When she spoke to him he started and drew back as though involuntarily. It was as though she had roused him from his dream, and for a moment or two he did not understand what she was saying.

"Richard! . . . You are tired. Take my arm. . . . Please, take my arm."

His face was wet with tears ; the hand that held his cloth hat was shaking ; he looked at her with inscrutable eyes and then slowly passed on, down the path towards the gate. Very slowly and wearily, he walked back to the gate ; and, with bowed head, she followed him. He held the gate for her, and, after she had gone through, stood for a little while looking over the white tombstones towards the granite cross by the churchyard wall. Then he turned, put on his hat again, and spoke to her.

"Now, Sybil, give me your arm. Yes. I am tired—I am tired."

Sturgess, as a good and careful coachman, had been walking his horse up and down the road instead of allowing it to stand and catch cold after the long climb from the harbour. While they waited for the carriage, Richard Burgoyne was leaning on his wife's arm.

Nothing was hidden from him—that was his wife's thought. All, or nearly all, had come back to him. He knew or had guessed nearly all the truth. He was leaning on her arm now : he was speaking to her, while they stood by the gate and waited for the carriage. But, on the other side of the gate, in the garden of death, he would not touch her, he would not speak to her.

Yet it was on this spring day--as the sunlight faded and night came whispering, that for a little while she felt at peace.

She had been alone with her thoughts for a long time, sitting by the window of her room, watching the calm evening sky, listening to the whisper of the night voice as it sounded now in the murmur of the sea, now in the sighing of the wind, and of a sudden there was peace in her heart.

If he knew all, could it be possible that he would forgive her? To understand all is to forgive all. That phrase, many years ago, had been as an undercurrent in all her thoughts of him. Always the words returned to express the thought when she recognised some new evidence of his nobleness of mind. He could understand all things; for him there were no mysteries: his sympathy was boundless because there were no limits to the range of his intellect. Could it be possible that if he knew all the wrong, he yet would, one day, pardon her? Could she hope that a day might come when, knowing all, he would understand her remorse—her long agony of remorse, and tell her that she had been forgiven?

How much did he know now? She thought of all the long days since he had resumed his work: of his asking her to help him, of his praise of her on many days for her patience and her care. He gave her kind words often, but never the old words of endearment. Looking back she could recall no word of his old trusting love in all the long days of toil in the quiet room. "Kind Sybil," "Patient Sybil"; but never "Sybil dear" as in the past. All, or nearly all, had come back to him. Wren said so often—nearly all the past had returned; but she had never believed until to-day. If so much of the past were there that he could connect her with the tragedy of Effie's death, it must be that he knew the wrong that she had done him. All, or nearly all, was there, and yet he had not sent her away from him. He had suffered her to remain: he had known and yet he had not disgraced her.

He was greater than all other men. Might she hope for

his pardon? As she thought of him now, something akin to peace returned to her. If he knows of her sin, he has not sent her away from him. Perhaps already he has understood all the torment of her remorse. Perhaps he has been watching her punishment. Perhaps she is working out her punishment day by day beneath the eyes that know all when they seem to know nothing of her pain. He has kept her with him and will have no other help but hers. She is his servant and must wait upon his will. She must wait patiently.

And there is peace in the thought. This is the thought to which she must hold. This is her task. Her only possible expiation lies in the fulfilment of the task he gives her.

The years themselves were gliding.

It was an autumn day and she sat before her dressing-table with a letter in her lap. Wren had sent her the letter to read. "This came last night from that poor fellow, Jack Stone. I fear it must be near the end with him now. The wonder is that he has gone on so long. It is very sad, but I thought you would like to see what he says, and perhaps you will care to send him a few lines yourself."

He had written to Wren often, but he had never written to her. She looked at herself in the glass. Her hair was all grey now; there were deep lines upon her face, and her eyes seemed dim in their sunken orbits. How long ago was it? Five long years—or yesterday? And again she looked at herself in the glass.

The man who had been her lover was dying. He wrote from Marseilles, and in his letter he told Wren of how he had been carried from a ship to a humble inn that common sailors used; of how strangers had been kind to him—two sailors off a yacht, a priest, and the wife of his landlord; of how arrangements had been made to send him on to San Remo as soon as he was well enough to travel. In his letter he spoke gratefully of money that Wren had sent him a year

ago. It had arrived most opportunely, just when he had lost his employment on the Royal Mail line and was seeking another job. Now he was glad to say he had sufficient funds. At San Remo he understood that he could live very cheaply. "And no doubt die cheaply too," he added. He gave the address that would be his at San Remo, and he asked Wren to write to him there.

He had taken money from Wren, but he had refused to take money from her.

She saw Dr Wren before the morning was over, returned the letter to him, and made him promise to send money from her in his name.

"If you insist, Mrs Burgoyne—but I don't like taking credit for your kind thought and generosity."

"It is for his sake. If he knew that it came from me, he would not use it. He would send it back to me."

"Oh no, why should he? He did send it back that other time, but then he was not in any need. Now, although he says he is all right, your gift must be useful."

"He would not accept a gift from me."

"Oh, I don't think that. No—poor fellow—I think perhaps that it would cheer him to know that he was not forgotten by you."

"He will know that. I have written to him."

"Have you? I hoped you would—I was sure you would. I know that it will cheer him now to hear from you."

She asked Dr Wren if he could write to one of the doctors at San Remo and beg him to visit the sick man, as a friend if not professionally; and Dr Wren promised to do this also.

"Did you," asked Dr Wren, "mention to Mr Burgoyne that we had received news of Jack?"

"No. I have not told him."

"Will you do so?"

"No."

"No. I suppose it is best not, and yet—I wonder! Has he never spoken of Jack in all this time—never asked a single question about him?"

"No. Never."

"Then no doubt it will be best not to tell him anything—either now, or later. He was so fond of Jack that I was in doubt whether he should not be told. But I can understand his silence. The association is too painful."

In this autumn weather it seemed that the sense of time had gone from her for ever. It must be always autumn now—mist and rain and falling leaves: shortening days—the passage from life to decay. While she sat at her desk working for her husband, the silent room was full of ghosts and she herself was a ghost. She could see her lover sitting at the other desk, she could hear his voice, even while she listened to her husband's dictation and mechanically set down his words. Through the mist and the rain she could see herself walking with her lover in the garden, or standing by his side at the window and looking into the quiet room—two ghosts of lovers who had lived and loved hundreds of years ago.

All her world was passing from life to death. All that had been life in this house of thought had passed from it for ever. Only thought and the work of thought endured.

All the world was falling to decay. One day, when she stood alone in the garden, it seemed to her that death and not time was visibly working. Since her husband's illness the garden had been neglected: there was grass on the gravel paths; the borders were full of coarse rank shrubs; in a few years the gardeners had become lazy, stupid, and old. Nothing was ever mended or renewed.

Thinking of her lover, she went one day to Effie's summer-house. Glass in the windows had been broken; there was green slime on the floor and on the walls; the rain had come through the roof; plaster had fallen from the ceiling. The place was a tomb. Standing just within the threshold she thought of him. He was dying at San Remo, and he had not written to her.

Again in this autumn weather she was sitting at her dressing-table. Wren had been talking to her in the passage outside

the workroom. Now he was seeing her husband, and she had come up here to be alone with her thoughts. Soon the sound of wheels would tell her that Dr Wren had gone, and then she would go down again, sit at her desk and go on with her work.

The grey clouds and the grey sea were one to-day : the mist and the rain were sweeping inland, hiding the house, hiding all the world beneath grey veils. It was as though the shadows had triumphed over substance, as though the real world was gone for ever and only the shadow world remained : it was as if to-day thought and life had met in their last struggle and life lay vanquished—thought had won the fight.

He was dead—at San Remo, and he had not written to her. Her lover was dead—and she looked at her face in the glass.

The sound of the wheels upon the wet gravel came soon, but she did not hear it. She did not hear the servant tapping at the door. Mary had come into the room, was standing close beside her, before she could rouse herself from her reverie.

The master had sent Mary to say that Dr Wren had gone. The master will be glad if the mistress can come down to the workroom.

“Sybil. Do you mind? I want your help badly. . . . Kind Wren has wasted nearly an hour for me—and I am so anxious to get on as quickly as possible.”

Nearly all the morning he dictated from his pencil manuscript ; and then, writing swiftly, filled four or five sheets with rough notes.

“Now I must stop. Sybil, I think I must do no more. I am tired. . . . But I think I have made up for the time lost by kind Wren’s visit.”

He leaned upon her arm heavily as she helped him from the chair to the couch ; and he was asleep almost as soon as she had arranged the rug. While he slept she sat by the couch, waiting patiently until he should wake refreshed after the brief rest and be ready to lean upon her arm again as they walked to the dining-room for luncheon. This is her task.

While he sleeps she is thinking of him, and of his work. Outwardly he too may change ; inwardly nothing can change him. He only can defy the years, can rise above the common ills of flesh, can live unchanged through pain and grief and shame, because he is thought itself personified.

There is only one thing that is real, one thing indestructible —thought, or the work of thought. All else vanishes. We ourselves are even as a sleep. Why should one mourn for the dead or cling to the living ? They are shadows that move and then fade. And she thinks of her own life—of how all has gone out of it. Passion was there—yesterday, but to-day all is cold. Hope, gladness, and, last of all, fear has gone. Effie is dead—Stone is dead ; all that made her old self is dead. People, places, things that made her life have all faded or are fading fast out of her life. Only her husband's thought remains. That, and only that, has prevailed. Only thought endures. All else is transient, futile, and unreal.

XXXII

THE years were flying now. It was six years since he had resumed his work, and still in the quiet room the steady work went on.

The first book written after his recovery is *Where Light May Come*. It is a speculative treatise dealing with the boundaries of knowledge, touching on every problem of modern science, pointing out all the lines of thought that may lead to fresh discoveries of hidden truths. He wrote it without using any of his old notes—scarcely looking at his portfolios, almost without opening a book. It was an exercise—nothing more. But the book had an immediate popular success. Its reception by the public was that of *The Magic Mirror* over again. It was translated, within twelve months, into a dozen languages and had run through more than a dozen editions. Of all Richard Burgoine's works, this and *The Magic Mirror* have without doubt been most widely circulated.

Then, in the chronological order of publication, comes *The Well-gleaned Field*—the volume in which he gives his last words on the allied subjects of Ethical ideal and Sociological endeavour. Then comes the book which by the verdict of the world now ranks as his greatest—*The Mechanism of Thought*.

He was in his seventy-eighth year when he settled down to the heavy labour of completing the interrupted *Mechanism*. The rewriting of chapters five and six in the first volume, and the block from page 147 of the second volume (original edition) to the end represent a year's dogged unflinching work. Throughout this year his wife was giving him all the aid that in the past he had looked for from Mr Edmundson and Mr Stone. All who are familiar with this book will understand how great was the labour of the author's secretary. There is scarcely a page without a footnote; the authorities cited are beyond

belief numerous ; there is an Appendix A, B, C, and D, containing statistical tables of observed cases in half the hospitals of Europe—tables of chemical analysis, of climate, diet, age, and sex influences, of historial epochs, of zoological divisions, etc. etc.; and there is an index which for fulness and accuracy has won the praise of countless readers. All this was the work of one secretary—his wife. With the directions and exhausted notes left by Stone as her only guide in method, she succeeded in doing all the dead man used to do. She was toiling without respite, rising early, going to bed late, sleeping calmly now throughout the flying year, and each day of toil brought her new peace.

The *Mechanism* is the first in the long series of his books to bear a dedication.

“I dedicate this treatise to the memory of Robert Denton.

“And, as a slight token of regard and gratitude, to my kind friends : George Wren, Isaac Keeling, Edward Grenville, Allen Marriott, James Bowers, and Frederick Grange.”

Then, in the order of publication, comes the famous *Proofs and Probabilities*. It is the summing up of a lifetime's thought ; it is a marvellous piece of synthetic work ; it is said to be the crown of the noble monument of which *The Causes and Consequences* forms the colossally solid base.

The writing of the book occupied exactly nineteen months. He was writing faster now than he had ever written. He was “working double tides” with only his wife to help him. From the first planning of this book, ere the *Mechanism* was through the press, to the day on which he sent its preface to the printers, he consulted with his wife, confided in her all its aim and scope, as years ago he had been accustomed to discuss his work with Stone.

“Sybil dear.”

They were driving together on the road by the river, and when he spoke she put her hand upon his arm and her fingers trembled. The word of endearment had come. Words of gratitude, of encouragement, of praise for her unflinching industry there had been many—but never till now the old word of love.

"Sybil dear. I would like to tell you about my new book. May I?"

He was wonderful—above the law. The years could not harm him: time dared not touch him. She kept her hand upon his arm; and, watching him while she listened to his words, all sense of time or change was obliterated. He was fragile and his face was like carved ivory, but the power of his mind, while he talked now, made him to seem massive and strong. Thought lit up the pale face and flashed from his eyes, and played about his lips in a wonderful smile.

"You know, Sybil—those stupid beggars of critics used to chaff me about my trick of alliteration. Oh yes, they used to try to be monstrously funny—chaffing me, you know, about my alliterative titles."

Time was destroyed: the long, long years were nothing. He was unchanged, unchanging. She was listening to the same man who had sat at her father's table—the honoured guest who smiled and chatted and forced you, against your will, to forget his greatness. And she was a girl again, drawing long breaths while she listened, watching the light in the kind eyes, thrilling with pride and flushing faintly because the light was shining upon her.

"Yes. They almost broke my nerve—those yapping critics. But, do you know, Sybil—upon my word, I think I'll do it again. I really think I must call my new book *Proofs and Probabilities*."

Then he told her his scheme.

"It will be quite easy, Sybil. Just going over all the ground for the last time, eh? Just a surface survey—don't you know," and he smiled. "Just a rattling good shake-up of the kaleidoscope—till we get a symmetrical pattern—and perhaps, if we are lucky, here and there something new in the fresh grouping of the old thoughts—eh?"

Then he praised her for her untiring industry.

"Sybil dear. I said it would be easy for *me*, but perhaps it will not be easy for you. There will be work in it—heavy work in it for you. Will you mind?"

"I do not mind the work—I love the work."

"Good Sybil. Brave Sybil. Very well—that is what you and I will set about, as soon as we have polished off this dreadful *Mechanism*."

She kept her hand upon his arm, and the fingers ceased to tremble.

"Sybil, do you think our kind friends—the doctors, will like my dedication?"

"Yes, I am sure that they will."

"You see—I left out compliments purposely. It would not do to pay them compliments—that would not do, would it?"

"No."

"No compliments to men of that class. You know, I have never tried to shuffle off my obligation by any sort of payment. I would not now seem to pay them in such base coin as compliments."

They drove along the river by the white road that twists beside the railway following each turn of the twisting stream, and all the world seemed changed. The ugly work of time showed itself wherever one looked—in terraces of mean houses where there had been smiling fields, the long embankment of the new reservoirs, chimneys of a factory, and pretentious little villas and newly made roads and levelled hedges. Only he was unchanged.

"But, Sybil, I have ideas of what we might do later on—if you will help me. I have not thought of business matters for a long time—but they tell me I am growing rich—far too rich. When we are free—between books, I would like you to help me to spend some of this money."

And for a little while he talked to her of the Research Studentships that he had founded long ago.

"I think they have done good—I think they have been really useful. . . . We might do something of the same sort—but on a larger scale—if it is true, as they tell me, that I am such an old money-bags."

They drove out into the quiet valley between the hills, where the river meanders through the wide marshes and the road to

Bevis Castle cuts the road to Slanes. He was silent now. It was a beautiful afternoon in October ; the light was golden, and the beech copse on the hillside was burnished gold—all the valley seemed sleeping. They passed the white farm, and she looked into the farmyard, at the barns, and the little garden ; but there was no sign of life. Far and near the valley seemed deserted. Then, as they came to the row of walnut-trees beyond the farm garden, the road was carpeted with fallen leaves and the sound of the horse's hoofs beating on the road suddenly ceased. They were moving through a valley of silence in an unreal world of peaceful unquestioning dreams. Till they reached the last of the walnut-trees, that old sense of unreality was strong upon her. Her hand closed upon his arm, and instinctively she drew closer to his side.

Presently the humble little carriage came to a standstill. The shabby but honest old horse had slackened in his gait as a hint to Sturgess, the driver, and had then stopped. The horse knew the customary limits of the afternoon drive. Sturgess turned on his seat to make inquiry.

"Home now, ma'am? Same way we come, it'll have to be to-day, ma'am."

They drove back from the peaceful valley, and in her heart she carried its silence and its peace. He had forgiven her. To-day she knew that she had gained her pardon. He had told her by flashes of his thought ; not in spoken words. But she was sure that she was forgiven. The veil had been lifted from the inscrutable eyes, and the old light had shone upon her. No matter what he remembered or what he guessed, he had given her again the old place in his thought. Perhaps he had watched her in every day of her long expiation ; perhaps he had been guiding, controlling her, waiting for this day. But now she had earned her pardon.

In silence they drove back towards the world of time and change, but the evening light now made all things beautiful. When they reached the outskirts of the little town the sun was setting. Among the brick walls again, they were driving through shadow while above them windows flashed as though

yellow flames were pouring out of a burning house. At the railway station the passengers from the five o'clock train came in a straggling crowd across the open space before the Anchor Inn—an indistinct mass of moving shadows, a procession of ghosts who turned familiar faces and in a moment were lost in the grey dusk.

He had loved the dead girl with all the strength of his vast brain, and yet he had forgiven. To understand all is to forgive all.

Mr Allen, the solicitor, was bowing to them. All through Pier Street, men and women bowed to them—came out of doorways or stood close to the carriage wheels to show her clearly the ugly work of time, to remind her of the havoc wrought by the flying years. Dr Wren and his wife, arm-in-arm before a lamp-lit shop, turned and unlinked their arms and waved their hands. Dr Wren raised his hat to show her a bald head: to prove to her that the years had not forgotten him. Dr Wren was a heavy middle-aged man; and Mrs Wren, who had been the belle of Whitebridge, was a heavy middle-aged woman—was the ghost of her own mother moving slowly through the dusky street that she had loved in life. Mr Challoner, the new ascetic bachelor vicar, bowed to her, gave a priestlike ceremonious bow to remind her that the cruel years had dealt with Mr Townley, and that Mrs Townley in widow's weeds had left Whitebridge nearly two years ago. The narrow street was full of ghosts, and each familiar face told her its story of time and change.

At the corner of Harbour Wall, on the steps of the new library, Mr Ingle, the hairdresser, was talking to young Mr Hind, the enterprising successor to old Mr Hind, who died last January. Poor Mr Ingle was a broken man whose glib tongue had ceased wagging, who had no impudent familiarity for customers, no stinging reproofs now for the follies of youth. Mr Ingle did not see them pass. With downcast eyes he stood listening to young Mr Hind's ambitious dreams of the future—progress, expansion of trade, and still more progress—while he thought of dreams that were dead, of all that was past.

The young wife, who had provoked such wrath when she stood in the sunlight and laughed at him, defied him to hold her prisoner when waves were dancing and the light airs blew, had been made prisoner by Death ; and Mr Ingle was the ghost of his dead self, who crept out from the desolate home, when dusk was falling, to seek amidst the shadows the ghost of his dead love.

Time and change had dealt with all things, and only thought prevailed. In the midst of change, only the white-haired man by her side was unchanged, unchanging.

The honest old horse stopped his jog-trot as soon as they reached the end of Harbour Wall, and then, sedately walking, drew them up the slope of the hill. But they had passed through the lower zone of shadow and were mounting into the light again. As they climbed to the higher ground, the sun had risen again for them. Once more they passed beneath fiery windows, and all about them was the splendour of the evening light.

On the horizon there was a broad band of flame ; the sea was a limitless floor of crimson and gold ; and, above the low fringe of fire, the sky was hung with purple curtains and glittering veils of gold. With her hand upon his arm, she asked her husband to admire the glory of the dying day—to feel with her the beauty of sky and sea, to marvel at the colour and the light.

“Yes,” he said, “beautiful—most beautiful. . . . But, Sybil. It is here, you know”—and he raised his hand to his brow: “all the colour and the light. Not there,” and he pointed to the horizon. “All here. . . . Good Sybil. I am glad that you can feel the colour and the light.”

The quiet peaceful life goes on. Nineteen flying months of unremitting toil upon the new book for husband and for wife. But in this time there is something of communion with the changing world beyond the walled garden : at long intervals the doors of the house are opened to visitors. Once or twice a wandering sage from a Continental university has been per-

mitted to dine and sleep at Cliff Lodge. Mrs Wren, who is always honoured by Richard Burgoyne's high esteem, comes of an afternoon before the drive, with fat-cheeked, lisping children—Master Richard, her first-born, who promises to be a fine fellow like his father; and Miss Evelyn, who favours the Granger side of the house, who may grow into a beauty one day and be famous in amateur theatricals as was mamma.

Sometimes Master Richard is sent alone—for instance, to pay a formal visit of congratulation on Mr Burgoyne's birthday. Richard is, as he never forgets, Mr Burgoyne's godson, and it is proper therefore to be scrupulously attentive.

"I wiss you many happy returns of the day," says Richard, standing between godpapa's knees.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," says Mr Burgoyne. "And since you have been good enough to remember my birthday, I shall endeavour not to forget yours. Meantime"—and Mr Burgoyne, unaided, rises from the arm-chair—"I think we had better go into the dining-room and look for a slice of cake. Give me my stick, will you? . . . There's a clever boy to find the right stick."

"It's the only stick in the room—so I couldn't find the wrong one."

"To be sure; so it is. But you *are* a clever boy, aren't you?"

"Mother says I am."

"Then you may depend upon it you are. Your mamma would never make a mistake of that sort."

Then, while Master Richard eats all that portion of his cake which he does not spread in crumbs upon the dining-room floor, his godfather chats about birthday presents.

"What would you like, Dick, when the time comes?"

"A clockwork train."

"What! Another? Wasn't it a train last time—and one at Christmas too?"

"Yes, it was."

"Well, can't we think of something else for next birthday? Young Mr Hind won't have any trains left."

"Oh yes he has—one in the window now. I think I could not have too many trains. I often wiss I had as many trains as there is trains in a big London station."

"Upon my word! Any more cake? . . . No? That's a sensible boy. Now look here, Dick, this is what I am going to do with you. You see this sovereign, which I fold in this envelope. There is no deception. I am too clumsy for a conjurer. Now, put that in your pocket and keep it there till the birthday comes, and then buy yourself the present. When will that be?"

"Not for munse and munse."

"Oh dear me, what a pity! . . . Well, good-bye. Give my love to mamma and papa, and say we expect them to dinner on Wednesday."

Then Master Dick takes leave ceremoniously, but is called back from the hall.

"Dick. I say. I was only chaffing about your birthday. Don't wait for that. Buy the present now—this very day. Buy that train in Mr Hind's window—and oblige me."

And Dick promises faithfully to oblige his godfather and then trots away.

Once, when the Wrens are coming to dinner and it is time to go upstairs to dress, Richard Burgoyne speaks to his wife of the diamond heart that he hung round her neck while she stooped over his bed, on the 15th of November, nearly ten years ago. She had never worn it. Since that day he had never spoken of the long-remembered date—of the long-fêted anniversary of their marriage.

"I wish you would wear it. Wear it to-night, will you?"

"Shall I?"

Her eyes have drooped and her lips are trembling.

"Yes, dear—wear it. I should like to see you wearing it."

These little dinner-parties give pleasure to the host, and Dr Wren is unchanged at least in this—he feels more honoured as in one of Mr Benson's flies he drives towards the Lodge than if he were obeying his Sovereign's command to attend a State dinner and were now approaching the palace gates.

Sometimes the spirit of brooding silence passes through the room. The host is lost in thought; Wren too is thinking; the hostess is watching her husband; Mrs Wren, jovial and smiling, rustles her fan but finds herself tongue-tied. For a little while only the whispering of Mary and her busy lieutenants fights with the silent spirit. It is always Mrs Wren who drives the spirit from the room: as when, to-night, she bursts forth in admiration of "dear Mrs Burgoyne's too lovely diamond heart."

"And I have never seen it before. Too lovely for words!"

"It is a present from my husband," and Mrs Burgoyne holds out the pretty trinket on the black ribbon; and, while Mrs Wren examines it, looks at the present-giver and tries to read his thought.

Very early in the meal there comes a loud report from the hall. Mary has passed on a champagne bottle, with which she has struggled bravely but unsuccessfully, to an unseen male assistant outside the dining-room door. It is known that Mrs Wren has a preference for champagne over all other wines. Dr Wren drinks only a weak mixture of whisky and Apollinaris; the host and hostess drink only water now. Mrs Wren attributes much virtue to the effervescing wine, and perhaps believes that if she did not thus fortify herself, she would be no better able to fight the brooding spirit than are the three other members of the party.

Old grey bustling Mary alone is left of the servants who knew and loved Miss Effie. Sarah has gone with lamentation at duty's call to keep house for a bed-ridden father, but is not without hope that she may one day return to be again second in command to Mary. The music of wedding bells has drawn the others from the silent house each in her turn—Ruth, Cook, upper and lower housemaid, and the wench in the outermost kitchen recesses. All who knew her are gone, except the one who loved her most—poor grey old Mary.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, there is conversation but no piano-playing. The spirit of silence has been given power over the piano for ever. Dr Wren knows and Mrs

Burgoyne knows why here the spirit rules supreme and none may fight with it; but Mrs Wren does not know. Once Mrs Wren offered to break the spell for them, but the host explained that her skill could give him little pleasure.

"The fact is, my dear Mrs Wren, that my hearing is, I fear, getting so dull—that—that music really troubles me. I cannot enjoy it as I once did. No, sit by me here and give me the music of your friendly voice."

Dr Wren knew that the host's hearing was almost as acute as ever. Mrs Wren thought she might have raised the friendly voice in song. She could sing a comic song to her own accompaniment with unflagging verve and much of the old charm; and if dear Mr Burgoyne could not hear *that*, he must be very hard of hearing indeed.

Mr Benson's fly was always ordered at a quarter past ten, and, though Dr Wren was apt to linger for last words with his revered host, the evening was always over by the half hour.

"Think of it," Dr Wren would say, driving back with his stout comfortable lady. "He is eighty-two—he is nearly eighty-three. Is he not splendid?"

"I wonder," said his wife once on the return drive, "if he ever thinks of that dear sweet girl."

"I am sure he does, my love," said Dr Wren. "Very often—always, I might say. But he never cares to speak of her. You won't forget that, will you, dear?"

"No," said good Mrs Wren. "But I am glad to think that he hasn't altogether forgotten her. They say old people do forget such things more easily than young people."

"That, my dear," said Dr Wren, "is probably true enough of ordinary people. But Mr Burgoyne is not ordinary—in any sense of the word."

Swiftly, too swiftly, the nineteen months had flown. The *Proofs and Probabilities* was nearly through the press: husband and wife were again standing "between books."

One afternoon in May the post brought the last packet from the printers. Mrs Burgoyne, sitting at the tea-table in the workroom, opened the tightly rolled parcel, and saw with surprise its contents. What was this? Sixteen pages of preliminary matter that had never passed through the secretary's hands, that the secretary had never seen until this moment!

"Richard! A preface! But I never copied it. I never——"

"No, dear. I did not want to bother you about it."

"Richard!"

"I had to go over it very carefully, myself—I managed to write it more plainly than usual—and I sent it to the printers without bothering you."

Hastily smoothing out the rolled sheets, she began to read the preface. There are people who say that because of its candour and its modesty it is the grandest preface ever written, in any tongue, in any age. Certainly it was of absorbing interest for the author's wife. Servants came into the room and carried away the tea-things, and she never looked up from the printed page; her husband moved from his chair and stood with an arm resting on the mantelshelf, and she was unconscious that he had stirred from his place on the other side of the table.

"At the risk of seeming to be tediously egotistical, I have determined to trouble my readers with some autobiographical details."

With this apology he began the story of his illness. Very briefly he recounted to the world how, ten years ago, while passing through "a wearisome bout of peripheral neuritis," he was so "unlucky" as to find himself the victim of cerebral haemorrhage.

"My medical advisers"—and again he gave to the world the names of all his kind friends—"placed the seat of the haemorrhage in that commonest of all situations, the region of the lenticular nucleus, left hemisphere; and I have no reason to doubt the correctness of their diagnosis. By a somewhat odd chance I was at this time engaged upon my

Mechanism of Thought, and indeed had been compelled to cease writing when busy with chapters five and six. These, I should explain, are the chapters in which I have attempted a close scrutiny of the organs of mental action when considered simply as parts of the working machine, and again, when considered from the point of view of their interdependence, as the whole framework of thought. Students will understand how naturally it occurred to me to turn my misfortune to account by using myself as subject for observation, in analysing my own sensations, and tracing so far as possible in my own case the impairment of function consequent upon the impairment of the machine; and I think I may truly say that, so far as it lay in my power, I never relaxed my efforts to this end. From the hour of returning perception to the hour nearly three years later when I was permitted to take up again my customary occupations, it was the steadfast endeavour of my life to lose no hints through laziness or inattention, to gain all the suggestions that my opportunities afforded—in a word, to draw from my personal disaster something, however small, that might be of general advantage."

Then he told the world of his slow recovery of speech: of how he learned to talk again as an infant learns to talk for the first time.

"From my own experience I was led both to modify and to extend my views on the dual and simultaneous activity of centrifugal impulses from the two hemispheres, and the large capacity of compensatory function that lies dormant in the right hemisphere. In this respect I think that I profited to an appreciable extent, and that the two chapters to which reference has been made are stronger and more likely to stand the test of time than they could have been but for my accident.

"I am convinced that in my own case the right hemisphere at once took up the task of supplying to the bulb the impulses necessary for speech production, and that it responded to the new call made upon it with comparative ease. I am naturally very clumsy with my hands. I am what is called right-handed,

but when I was a child, my nurse, rebuking me for manual blunders, often assured me that I had two left hands. Although I have written so many books I am the poorest of penmen, and I have persistently shirked the labour of perfecting myself in the penman's art. Once, when I was a lad at Oxford, my right arm was injured by a fall, and during the whole of one term I wrote with my left hand. I think that probably in consequence of these and other circumstances, the word centres in the right hemisphere were already far more fully organised than would be usual in a normal right-handed person, and that the difficulty in bringing them into play was correspondingly less.

"I surmise that in my own case the speech motor centres of the bulb were stimulated solely by the right hemisphere for five years, and that then the left hemisphere again came into play. Since then I think either hemisphere has been able to take the lead; and I hesitate in saying that I have been able to control the employment of either and both (of course in so far only as speech production is concerned) but, in my opinion, such is the fact.

"I certainly would not have put this belief, or surmise as I ought to call it, into printed words, but that I fancied they might prove of interest if read and considered in connection with the last four paragraphs of chapter five of the *Mechanism*, and, more especially, having regard to the paragraph which contains my conjectures as to the progress in future ages of auto-cerebral control. . . ."

He was wonderful—above the law. She read on, with absorbing, ever-increasing interest.

Now he was turning from the physical to the mental side of his "accident" and its results. He was telling the world, in the plainest words, that from the earliest possible moment he had been busy with work for the world.

. . . "While the motor aphasia still continued, I would test, during hour after hour, the openness of thought paths, and find how completely some were barred or broken. It seemed as though certain connections could never be made again. In

the sphere of memory the failures were astonishingly restricted in character. For whereas I had the clearest recollection of all the circumstances that caused or led up to the apoplectic seizure. . . .”

He had known always. The printed pages shook in her hand, and she laid them down. He had always remembered : he had always known of her guilt.

“ How does it read ? Have you finished it, dear ? ”

He was standing on the hearth. Now their eyes met.

“ No. I have not quite finished it,” and she picked up the proof and read on—hastily, here and there, until she reached the end of the preface.

. . . “ Lying thus, a thinking log, I realised with grief that my reasoning powers must be irretrievably injured, and decided that henceforth I must seek for untrammelled effort not in Argument but in Speculation alone. And I have striven to act always on this decision. It has not, however, been possible for me to refrain from attempting logical arrangement of facts as well as disconnected exposition of ideas.

. . . “ But students of my books should bear in mind the date of which I have spoken, and in their use of all that I have written since that date should be chary of relying upon any logical chain that I may have tried to forge. Where the links are broken—and there must be many such broken links, which I am pathognomically unable to detect—students should assign this cause, and not think unkindly of me as of a workman grown careless and unworthy of his work.”

He is not looking at her. He is standing by the hearth with an arm upon the mantel shelf, and while she sits thinking, he watches the white flakes as they fall from the burnt logs in the grate. He had known always, and yet he had not disgraced her. He had known, and yet he had kept her with him. As he moves from the fire to the arm-chair, she comes to him and takes his hand ; and he rests his other hand upon her head.

“ My good, my brave Sybil. Best of friends, best of wives—

always"; and at the sight of her tears his voice for a moment is broken. "All my gratitude—all my love—always."

She has sunk upon her knees and is kneeling before him.

"I want to tell you."

"No. Tell me nothing."

He is smoothing the coarse grey hair as he used to smooth the soft dark tresses, and she looks up at him through tears.

"There is nothing to tell me," and he lays his finger on her forehead. "The thoughts were there—the bad thoughts—but they are gone. The good thoughts are there now—they have been there for over two years."

It is true. She understands—and it is true. She has nothing now in her thought of him but love and reverence. Her old self has been long dead. She has been born again.

And dimly she understands the deeper meaning of his ambiguous phrase. He speaks of thoughts, but he means actions also. It is the old mystery. To him the thought and the action are all one—for him subjective and objective phenomena are one. It is this that makes him greater than all other men. He has gone a little farther than the rest and he stands beckoning, seeming to say: "Down this widening avenue all human minds must progress."

Only he could have forgiven. Only he could have understood. He has made this incredible proof of magnanimous power. He has shown in his noble life, so that she can comprehend it, all that he has shadowed forth—all that lies beyond her comprehension in his noble books.

She leans her forehead on his knee and weeps.

XXXIII

THE newspapers were busy still with his name and with his fame. Our correspondents had been calling him "the aged philosopher" ever since he was sixty-five: now he was eighty-four, eighty-five—nearly eighty-six, and they used the epithet less frequently. It was as though he had tired them out. The obituary notices had been brought from the editorial pigeon-holes, to be written "up to date," so many times that the ink on the typewritten copy had faded, the paper itself was yellow, frayed, and tattered. Skilled hands that had written last tributes of praise were cold in death; but he, the subject of the praise, lived on.

All men knew his name; his fame was growing, ever growing; the word-loving public craved for more words, and editors must somehow satisfy the craving: no week passed without "a long piece" in the public press.

"It is probably not generally known that Mr Burgoyne, the doyen of philosophy, is possessed of vast wealth. The fortune that his books have yielded the author is probably the largest that has ever been amassed by the industry of a single pen. Mr Burgoyne has reaped in fullest measure the benefits conferred upon literary workers by the provisions of the Copyright Act. It is now more than fifty years since the first appearance of *The Magic Mirror*, and throughout this period it has given the owner of the copyright a steady revenue which has been variously estimated, but which cannot well fall short of the average of three thousand pounds per annum. And this book, it must be remembered, is only one of many. It is but fair to add that, if Rumour's tongue speaks truly, Mr Burgoyne's charity has been as munificent as his means have been large."

Rumour's tongue at least was speaking truly about the creation of these new Vincent Studentships.

"Mr Burgoyne — himself the master of research — has founded ten Research Studentships of three hundred a year each. Thus with a golden key has Richard Burgoyne once more opened the gates of knowledge. Ten times three is thirty, and thirty hundreds represent the interest on a capitalised sum of one thousand hundreds. Thus, with a stroke of the pen, has been signed away the tenth part of a million. One could have wished that the donor had perpetuated his name in the gift by calling the endowment the Burgoyne fund. But the name of Burgoyne needs no *réclame* and there is a pretty story attaching to that name of Vincent."

O Rumour, Rumour !

"Sixty years ago, when Richard Burgoyne was struggling for bread, one Vincent, a fellow-student, came to his assistance and possibly saved him from starvation. The two youths were both filled with a lofty ambition to make and leave a name behind them. Richard Burgoyne has ever averred that his friend Vincent was intellectually the stronger of the two. But Vincent died unknown in early youth, and now the friend who survives rescues the name from oblivion. . . ."

Any words—bosh words, if you can find none other. But give us words.

And indeed if an old gentleman will not come out of his house and bring us "the official information," what are we to do? If when we call to inquire, to send in our card, to ask for a few minutes' quiet informal chat, a grey Gorgon of a parlour-maid shuts the hall door in our faces, what then? He is in his bath-chair, probably, in his pleasure grounds—wrapped in his cape, the round shooting cap on his head, the muffler about his neck, as we saw him in the last published snap-shot —just snoozing in the sun very likely. Now, could it hurt the old gentleman to rouse himself and say half-a-dozen words to one of our correspondents?

Very good. He is refusing to see us at his own proper peril. If he won't give us the facts, he mustn't complain. Here is the editor's explicit order. Thirteen hundred words.

"In an age when titular honours are so freely lavished on

mediocrity, it will be welcome news to many that Mr Burgoyne is shortly to be ennobled. Hitherto he has always refused the distinctions which the State has to offer. He might have been summoned to the Most Honourable Privy Council many years ago ; and under the last Liberal administration the wish was expressed to see him seated in the gilded chamber, but he pleaded his personal disinclination to avail himself of the proposed compliment. He has remained therefore ‘the great commoner’ of our time. Now, however, he has bowed to the desire of the present Prime Minister and the advice of his numerous friends, and has signified his willingness to accept the coronet that he might have worn more than a decade since. . . .”

And again :—

“Mr Burgoyne authorises us to publish an emphatic contradiction of the report that he is about to be raised to the peerage. Nothing could be farther removed from the truth than the recent statements to this effect.”

But if he had consented to see visitors, he would not have been put to the trouble of dictating a letter to the London editor. He has brought it on himself.

He would not see visitors. He was almost inaccessible to strange visitors. He was in fact a busy man, who could not afford the time necessary for the formation of new friendships. He had written *The Data of Dreams* and another light book, and now he was gathering together the materials for the volume that was to be called *Fireside Reveries*.

In this summer-time—his eighty-sixth summer—it happened that Bevis Castle was let to a foreign princess. This illustrious lady, with her own equerries and the equerry she had borrowed from the Court of St James’s, with her own lady-in-waiting and the lady who had been lent to her by Buckingham Palace, with her royal equipages and her royal week-end guests—with so much to render her interesting and attractive to intelligent curiosity, this beautiful and illustrious lady greatly relieved the pressure upon Cliff Lodge. At least half of our correspondents got out of the train at Slanes Junction and plodded

along the white road towards the glittering towers of Bevis, instead of going on to Whitebridge to look up Mr Burgoyne.

One morning, however, pressure came upon the Lodge from the Castle. The post brought an unexpected and unwelcome packet from Bevis. Colonel Sir Augustus Chawling wrote to say that his temporary mistress desired to wait upon Mr Burgoyne; and he enclosed a letter from Professor Jenner Cox, wherein, with the most flourishing compliments to all concerned in the transaction, the Professor promised that the visit would be highly grateful and comforting to his "distinguished *confrère*."

The years had not changed this Professor: the years had not yet burst the swollen envelope of the spurious reputation. When our correspondents called on *him*, he was always at home. Nay, if our correspondents failed to drop in now and then in a friendly way, he would come out of his house to seek our correspondents, to slap them on the back, and playfully to chide them for neglect. He was the friend of princes—he was the only man of science who was punctual in attendance at levees. He was always to be seen at the funeral of "a *confrère*": he looked solemn, but he must have been happy at funerals of the great, the really great workers—because dead men tell no tales.

"O Sybil! Bothering, tiresome fellow! . . . I will not see her. Really I cannot see her. You must write to this—Sir Augustus, with some polite excuses. . . . Say I am stone-deaf—anything. You will know how to put it cleverly and kindly," and Mr Burgoyne went on with his work.

"No, I could not support it." The pencil had stopped, and he looked round with a smile. "You know, it is a trick of these princes—it is a very vulgar trick that I believe is common to all princes—this desire to see any aged person who is in any manner notorious. It enables them to say afterwards: 'Oh yes, I saw him just before the end. He was very old, but he answered all my questions with propriety. There was, however, no evidence of the *cleverness* one had been led to expect,'" and Mr Burgoyne chuckled and then went on with his work.

"Sybil dear." The pencil had stopped again. "Did I ever tell you what Professor Jenner Cox really is? . . . He is a consummate ass."

But, after a fortnight, there came another letter, a very different sort of letter—from the north.

Old Henriksen, the great Scandinavian, wrote from his white-walled house at Malmö in the north to the white-walled house at Whitebridge in the south.

"It is said that you see none, but our Fairy Princess is in your land and would come to give you a northern flower. You will receive her for our sakes."

"Yes," said Mr Burgoyne, "you must write to say we will take the flower. . . . Sybil dear, you must write at once to this equerry or lady-in-waiting—which was it?—and say we shall be glad to see her Royal Highness whenever she is disposed to confer upon us the honour of a visit."

In due course the pretty princess came over from Bevis Castle, with her equerry and her lady-in-waiting. She had pretty blossoms in her hand—some of the northern flowers picked in the garden by Strömstad's rock-girt bay and sent to her every week to remind her of home. She had a very pretty smile on her lips as she pinned her nosegay to the lapel of Mr Burgoyne's coat.

"It is the *majblomma*, sir," she said, smiling.

"It is the *primula farinosa*, ma'am," said Mr Burgoyne, "but henceforth it is the *majblomma* for me. I shall recognise it by no other name."

The little party drank tea in the workroom. Mr Burgoyne wrote his name in a copy of *The Data of Dreams* and presented the volume to his pretty guest. Sir Augustus Chawling expressed admiration of the room, and Lady Milldale expressed admiration of the large number of books in the room. When the visitors left, the host, leaning on his wife's arm, escorted them to the porch; and Sir Augustus, suddenly burrowing beneath the carriage seats, dragged out a photographic camera and secured three excellent snap-shots of the group in the porch.

Lady Milldale is, of course, the widow of the historian, and herself a scribbler. She records the afternoon excursion in her recently published diary, with the sprightly, yet not ill-natured, touch-and-go manner that has made her book deservedly popular.

"Very memorable to me," says Lady Milldale, "was a visit we paid to the great Mr Burgoyne. Something I had said about the famous philosopher aroused the curiosity of the Princess. In this I confess it was one for H.R.H., and six or seven for myself, as *I* was keenly anxious to see him.

"He was amiable, but would not be *drawn*; yet with quite the grand air, and a gentle fatherly ease that won all our hearts—the Princess's included. I observed, naturally, rather than talked, and have a lively impression of what was a most remarkable personality.

"But almost as remarkable, to my mind, was Mrs Burgoyne—with one of the most wonderful faces I have ever seen. She must have been a pretty woman, and with white hair would still have quite passed for his daughter. A thin face, but I really think I never saw such a wonderful expression on any face—as if the love and veneration had stamped themselves, and told one the undeviating devotion of her life more plainly than words. It was very touching to me—this picture of wifely devotion. They say she was but a girl when he married her, thirty years ago; and she told the Princess very simply, that in all her life she had only lived in two houses: her father's house at Woking, and her husband's, here at Whitebridge."

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